

**University Teachers' Perception of Assessment in Kazakhstan**

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### **Declaration**

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and to the best of my knowledge it contains no materials previously published or written by another person, or substantial proportions of material which have been submitted for the award of any other course or degree at NU or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in the thesis. This thesis is the result of my own independent work, except where otherwise stated, and the views expressed here are my own.

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## Ethical Approval

### NUGSE RESEARCH APPROVAL DECISION LETTER

The NUGSE Research Committee reviewed the project entitled "University teachers' assessment beliefs and practices in Kazakhstan" by Zhadyra Makhmetova and decided:

- ☐ To grant approval for this study
- ☒ To grant approval for this study subject to minor changes, to be signed off by supervisor
- ☐ To request additional information/clarification to determine approval
- ☐ To refer the application for IREC review

**Minor changes and approval:** The study is approved subject to minor changes.

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Sincerely,

NUGSE Research Committee

### **Dedication**

I dedicate this thesis to my family in Oral and in Astana. Without their support, I will not be able to finish writing my Master thesis. Especially, I dedicate this study to my mother who with her believes in me always gives an inspiration to discover new things. Thanks each member of my families for their patience, and thanks to Allah for having these people in my life.

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### **Abstract**

Assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning. There have been many research studies worldwide conducted on assessment, and specifically focusing on assessment in higher education. Many international research studies focus on the importance of teachers' assessment beliefs and practices. However, this topic has not been researched in Kazakhstan. The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore teachers' assessment beliefs and practices of assessment approaches in one university in Oral town of Kazakhstan. The case study design was conducted, and it enabled the researcher to undertake an in-depth exploration of the topic in one university in Oral. Purposefully selected five university teachers were interviewed, and teachers' syllabuses were reviewed to gather data. The study thus presents interesting findings about the university teachers' assessment beliefs and practices. The findings contribute to the body of knowledge in this field and also offer some key practice and policy implications.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

In this chapter, I describe the study that I conducted as a requirement for my graduate studies programme at Nazarbayev University. The topic of the research is the university teachers' assessment beliefs and practices. This chapter first presents Research Topic, followed by Statement of the Research Problem, and then Purpose of Research and Research Questions.

Resisting changes in the present world of globalization it is unavoidable. This is the case of education as well. The bright example of one of the consequences of globalization is the Bologna Process. The Bologna Process steps in the tertiary education with a rapid speed, and brings its reforms to countries' educational policy. Kazakhstani tertiary education is not an exception. Thus, in the light of fulfilling requirements of the Bologna Process, new educational system with award of credits was introduced.

New educational system aimed to improve students' learning, and views students as self-directed learners. Thus, students are responsible for their study, and have an ability to assess their learning, and make some decisions to increase their learning. The role of teachers is to facilitate and direct students to learn by themselves. Teachers' assessment approaches also were changed.

Thus, this study refers to the teachers' assessment beliefs and practices in higher education of Kazakhstan. My interest in conducting this study aroused from my experience as a student. I have experienced different type of assessment: norm-referenced and criterion-referenced. Norm-referenced form of assessment was the prevailing in university where I took my bachelor degree. Norm-referenced could be described as “determining the quality of a pupil's performance by comparing it to the performance of other pupils” (Shamatov, 1998, p. 20). In addition, assessment approach here could be referred as

traditional because teachers did not use new forms of assessment such as portfolios, peer-assessment, and self- assessment.

After becoming a master student in Graduate School of Education (GSE) at Nazarbayev University, I was introduced to another form of assessment which is criterion-referenced. Criterion- referenced assessment refers to assessment that determines “the quality of a pupil's performance by comparing it to pre-established standards of mastery” (Shamatov, 1998, p. 20). In GSE, I was assessed and evaluated for achieving particular criteria formulated according to the goals of the course, for understanding the content of information, and for my ability to use obtained knowledge in analyzing some issues.

In this sense, Samuelowicz and Bain (as cited in Fletcher, Meyer, Anderson, Johnson & Rees, 2011) argue about assessment role in teaching methodologies, and describe it as follows:

Those who viewed teaching and learning as the transmission of knowledge were more likely to view assessment as a method to test students’ ability to reproduce the information. In contrast, those who saw teaching and learning as facilitating critical thinking viewed assessment as an integral part of the learning process for problem analysis and application (p. 121).

This means that assessment cannot be viewed separately from teaching and learning. In addition, it means teachers’ beliefs of teaching and learning may have direct influences on their assessment practices (Brown, 2009). From the discussion above, it becomes clear that the significant place of assessment in achieving educational goals. However, more important thing is that how teachers understand and practice assessment. Therefore, this study focuses on the teacher’s assessment beliefs and practices in Kazakhstani tertiary education.

## Statement of the Research Problem

In the Bologna reforms there is much emphasis on increasing students' learning and making students to be self-directed learners. This is because self-directed learning leads students to become life-long learners which is one of the most important goals of the Bologna Process (European Commission, 2009; Tan, 2007). In this regard, assessment is most helpful instrument for teachers to achieve these aims. Many research studies have been conducted focusing on assessment that improves students learning and students' self-directed learning. However, it is only helpful when teachers use assessment methods for the purpose to improve students' learning and their ability to direct their learning further. In this regard, numerous researches were conducted to reveal teachers' perceptions on assessment (Brown, 2009).

While there are a lot of researches on assessment worldwide, this problem has not been researched in our country. Researchers have not considered the perceptions of teachers who were faced with redesigning of assessment approaches. There is a lack of knowledge about university teachers' understanding of assessment methods.

By conducting this research, policy makers and administrative staff of universities can better understand the effectiveness of the current reforms in the higher education sector in Kazakhstan. This study will benefit higher educational leaders and teachers who can create or revise assessment approaches based upon the findings of the study.

**Research Questions.** This research study aims to explore teachers' assessment beliefs and practices in one university in Oral. In order to achieve this purpose the following research question was developed:

How do teachers understand and practice assessment approaches in one university in Oral?

This question seeks to understand teachers' assessment perceptions and experiences of assessment methods. It should be noted that terms assessment beliefs, understanding, and perception will be used interchangeably. In order to answer to this question, a qualitative case study design was used. A case of one university in Oral was examined.

## **Conclusion**

In this section, I described why I conducted this research, and presented problem, purpose and question of the study. The next chapter will be addressed for reviewing literature on assessment approaches. Chapter three will cover a methodology of research. The next chapters will be addressed for presenting findings and discussion of the study. Finally, in the last chapter I will draw on implications, and suggestions of the study.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

Many studies have revealed the importance of understanding teachers' assessment approaches (Fletcher et al., 2011; Jessen & Elander, 2009; Lizzio, Wilson, & Simons, 2002). University teachers' beliefs and practices of assessment approaches is a focus of my research. However, I could not identify much literature and research on higher education teachers' assessment beliefs. Therefore, I mostly used literature on school teachers' assessment beliefs and practices which was widely researched by many authors. In the first part of this literature review, I examine literature related to the assessment approaches. The second section presents teachers' beliefs and practices of assessment. In the end, I present a conceptual framework and introduce key terms of assessment that are relevant to my study.

### **Assessment Approaches**

In this section, I review teachers' three assessment approaches: assessment of learning, assessment for learning and assessment as learning.

**Assessment of learning.** The conventional way of thinking about 'assessment of learning' is closely linked with traditional assessment and summative assessment. Traditionally, assessment of learning was independent from teaching and learning, and predominantly had a service function (Anderson, 1998; Black & Harry, 1990). Many studies investigated that assessment of learning is mostly done for ranking of students and it provides information about students' ranking to teachers, and schools, for controlling the obtained knowledge, or for certification students' competence and knowledge in a particular subject (Bloxam & Boyd, 2007; Hassan, 2011). Thus, assessment of learning is used by teachers to evaluate students' learning at the end of a course. In this sense, Bennett

(2010) argues that assessment of learning is the assessment of “what students have achieved” (p. 71).

Nowadays, traditional assessment approaches such as assessment of learning are drawing much criticism. This is because assessment of learning, or the summative assessment is mostly done in the form of the high-stakes examination, which only reports the final grades. All the same, when teachers only report the final classes, it does not permit giving a feedback, and improving students’ work (Black & William, 2009). In this way, students do not have a second chance for resubmitting and improving their work. Furthermore, as the summative assessment tasks mostly oriented on controlling the obtained knowledge on the final stage of the class, it is clear that students perform rote learning, often demonstrating surface understanding of a subject (Entwistle, 1997).

Another function of summative assessment is the selective function. It is connected with the aim of education in the past centuries to select the ‘outstanding’ students for universities, and for the high position job after graduating from a university (Kvale, 2007; Shepard, 2000). According to Black and Harry (1990), assessment served for “sorting needs of society” (p. 27). In addition, Cline (as cited in Freeman & Miller, 2010) claimed, “In the past a favourite metaphor for the process of educational assessment involved the notions of sorting and categorising” (p. 4). In other words, teachers evaluated students comparing their works, separating students into two levels: ‘excellent’ students, and those who ‘fail’ to be excellent (Sambel, McDowel & Montgomery, 2013). The main disadvantage of this kind of evaluation is that students start to compete with each other and it leads to a negative environment in a classroom (Shamatov, 1998).

The selective purpose of assessment is the case of norm-based or norm-referenced assessment. It is called the norm-based because teachers evaluate students’ work according to the norm, or average of the class (Black & Harry, 1990; OECD, 2014; Sambel et al,

2013). In this sense, many educational researchers, as Black and Harry (1990) claimed that in the norm-based assessment, teachers evaluate students along the normal distribution curve and that, therefore, fixed proportions of the population would be found in each part of the curve (p. 28). In this context, those students who ‘fail’ to be successful or ‘excellent’ are expected to reach the performance of ‘excellent’ students (Sambel, et al, 2013).

Moreover, due to norm-referenced assessment, only limited number of students in each class can get A grade (or other types of excellent marks), no matter how many of them may do the assignments according to the required tasks (Black & Harry, 1990).

There is another important disadvantage of the norm-referenced assessment. Numerous works have discovered that when the norm-referenced assessment is employed in a teaching practice, it is hard to give a feedback, and therefore to improve students’ learning (Black & William, 1998; Sadler, 1998). It is difficult to give the feedback by cause of the absence of set requirements for given assignments.

Due to many disadvantages of assessment of learning, a necessity to change assessment approaches has arisen and a lot of research studies and literature covered these changes of assessment approaches (Gibbs, 1999; Glasser, 1990; Lohman, 1993). Many researchers such as Knight (2002) criticized summative assessment in UK universities and come to conclusion that summative assessment is in ‘disarray’ (p. 275), which will be discussed in the next subsection.

**Assessment for learning.** Much of the work in new models of assessment is involved in a search for alternative ways of assessment (Black & William, 2009; Gijbels & Dochy, 2006; Hult & Wernerson, 2012; Weurlander, Sodrberg, Scheja, Hult & Wernerson, 2012). In this sense, Price, O’Donovan, Rust, Carroll (2008) emphasized on a switch from assessment of learning to assessment that will support learning. In particular, they argued for ‘assessment for learning’. If the traditional assessment was separated from teaching and

learning, and had a service function, assessment for learning makes assessment an integral part of teaching and learning (Biggs & Tang, 2007). Thus, education in many countries shifted from traditional assessment approaches to alternative, and the purpose of assessment to control and select had to change into the purpose which would enhance students' learning (Baeten, Kyndt, Struyven, & Dochy, 2010; Birenbaum, 2007).

Assessment for learning or assessment which enhances learning also could be named as the formative assessment. Nevertheless, there is no universally agreed definition of the formative assessment. With regard to making framework for the formative assessment or assessment for learning, Black and his colleagues conducted grounded studies (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, & William, 2003; Black & William, 2009). The study of Black and William (2009) established the theoretical frame having analyzed literature from the various traditions. These authors indicated that any testimony of formative assessment has to be examined through the lens of a teacher's plan to develop learning. They highlighted that formative assessment, as a core part of pedagogy, should design the learning tasks, considering "the priorities towards which the learning interactions are directed" (Black & William, 2009, p. 26). At the same time, assessment purpose directed to encourage the learner to be more actively involved in a learning process. Thus, assessment for learning involves students in the center of the learning process (Stiggins, 2005).

Another important study was conducted by Gibbs and Simpson (2005). They made a thorough examination of assessment conditions, which supports students' learning. Reviewing empirical studies on assessment, Gibbs and Simpson (2005) revealed eleven conditions under which assessment supports learning. As feedback is an engine of formative assessment, or assessment for learning, more than half of assessment conditions for supporting learning is concerned with giving an effective, sufficient, detailed and



timely feedback (Gibbs & Simpson, 2005). Moreover, assessment should be done according to the stated standards for assignments. This is because, firstly, teachers will be able to explain students why they got a bad mark, or a good mark. Secondly, students' will be able to understand the requirements of the task beforehand, and will try to improve their work by themselves.

The importance of stating standards for improving learning is discussed in many works. These studies emphasized on the use of criteria for improving learning (Black & William, 2009). Moreover, Sadler (1998) in his study claims that the feedback might have a negative effect if standards, or criteria is “inadequately specified” (p. 83). The assessment, which sets clear standards for assessment tasks, is called the criterion-referenced, or the criterion-based assessment. The criterion-referenced assessment allows teachers to give feedback based on students' achievement of assessment task's goals, and then what is needed to do further in order to reach the goals of assessment (Black & William, 2009; Sadler, 1989). In other words, the criterion-referenced assessment helps to visualize the learning gap, and what is exactly students' have to do to fulfill the learning gap. In this respect, it could be noticed that the basis of the standard-referenced assessment is the learning theory of Vygotsky (1978) – the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

While many countries turned down from the norm-referenced assessment, in Kazakhstani education, norm-referenced assessment is still taking place. The recent study of OECD (2014) investigated that school teachers assess students “against the median” (p. 117). It was noted by OECD that only Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools where the talented and gifted students study started to apply the new, alternative to the norm-referenced assessment – the criterion referenced assessment.

**Assessment as learning.** There is another aspect of the formative assessment, which is “assessment as learning”. According to Dann (2002), assessment as learning

might be referred as students' involvement in assessment of their learning (p.150). In particular, assessment as learning is a self-awareness, or self-regulation of students about their learning. The role of feedback lies in the heart of assessment as learning, and cannot be used separately from teaching and learning (Dann, 2014). However, the feedback which is given by students to their own learning, and to the learning of their peers. Having reviewed learning theories and studies, Dann (2014) concluded that the intricacy of awareness of the learner and his/her learning couldn't be pushed aside in trying to grasp the strength of the feedback process in relation to assessment and all.

Many studies showed the importance of students' self-awareness about their learning, and its connection with students' self-directed learning, and with lifelong learning (Hanrahan & Isaacs, 2001; Patterson, Crooks & Lunyk-Child, 2002). From this standpoint, Tan (2007) in his study on the conceptions of self-assessment identified three types of conception of self-assessment, and examined its influence on students' long-term learning. Having interviewed sixteen academics from three universities in Australia, he proposed that neither teacher-driven self-assessment, nor program-based self-assessment cannot be useful for their future self-directed learning. This is because, teacher-driven conception of self-assessment is used to 'please a teacher' (Tan, 2007, p. 118). Program-driven, self-assessment is the rigorous approach of self-assessment using of which students evaluate themselves according to the stated criteria, or standard of the program. However, the limitations of this approach are that students will be focused on only completing the requirements of a particular problem. Therefore, he called for future-driven, self-assessment during which students are allowed to assess according to the standards, constructed by students.

Concerning future-driven assessment, Tan (2007) argue that it will allow students to improve their self-awareness skill about learning not only during the studying program,

but also through the whole life. According to him this might happen owing to, “encompassing the principle of self-assessment as an assessment ability that involves students’ understanding, questioning, and challenging existing assessment practices” (p. 121). In this way, other researchers such as Rust, Price, and O’Donovan (2003) argued for the need to pay attention to developing students’ peer and self-assessment skills.

Not only students should get support in assessment approaches. Research article conducted by William, Lee, Harrison and Black (2010) highlighted the importance of giving a support for teachers to experience assessment for learning. In this sense, the authors argued that teachers would not experience, the recommendations of research on new approaches of assessment because of their daily workload (Black & William, 1998). Teachers’ beliefs and experiences on assessment will be thoroughly discussed in the next section.

### **Teachers’ Assessment Beliefs and Practices**

In this section, I will analyze literature on teachers’ assessment beliefs and practices. This discussion is central to my study because reviewing these studies will allow me to have a deeper view on teachers’ assessment beliefs and practices, and then will help me to answer to the overarching research question. In addition, I examine teachers’ conceptions of assessment regarding to the purposes of assessment. This is important because, as Guskey (2007) pointed out that in order to make an effective assessment, which improves learning, teachers’ perception about assessment and the way how teachers understand assessment results should be changed.

First, it is important to state how various educators refer to assessment beliefs and practices of teachers. According to Pajares (1992), “teachers' attitudes about education, about schooling, teaching, learning, and students have generally been referred to as teachers' beliefs” (p. 316). In other words, it is not only about knowledge of education,

teaching or learning, but it is their attitude to them. From this standpoint, it is clear that teachers' beliefs have an influence on their teaching practices, as well as assessment practices. Furthermore, the numerous recent research studies showed the teachers' beliefs influence on assessment practices (Brown, 2009).

Teachers' beliefs on assessment are constructed with their knowledge about teaching, learning and assessment. In this regard, teachers' assessment literacy is crucial for constructing their beliefs and practices as well. If there is a less knowledge of assessment methods, in that case teachers' assessment beliefs is mainly based on their experience being a student (Guskey, 2007). In this way, teachers who did not have trainings or special courses on assessment tend to replicate their teachers experiences. Therefore, many studies suggested that it is crucial to develop teachers' assessment skills (Airasian, 1994; Stiggins, 1997). In this regard, Zhang and Burry-Stock (2003) conducted a study, which examines the relationship between secondary teachers' self-perceived assessment skills and assessment trainings. The study showed that those teachers who had assessment trainings reported higher levels of self-perceived assessment skills no matter how much teachers experience they had.

Beliefs and practices of teachers were thoroughly examined by Brown and his colleagues (Brown, 2003; Brown & Michaelides, 2011). In their studies, they rely on Thompson (as cited in Brown, 2004) understanding of conception which is "more general mental structure, encompassing beliefs, meanings, concepts, propositions, rules, mental images, preferences, and the like" (p. 3). Within the teachers' conception of assessment, they revealed four conceptions of assessment. According to Brown (2009), the improvement conception stresses on the use of assessment results for improving teaching and learning. Teachers, who have the improvement conception, believe that assessment methods they use could change students' learning and the instructional methods in a better

way (Black & William, 1998). The student accountability conception of teachers keeps students accountable for their learning (Brown, 2004). In this sense, teachers believe that their assessment tasks are done to certify students' for their study (Harris & Brown, 2009). The next is the conception for school and teacher accountability. The school and teacher accountability conception emphasizes on the need to perform results of studying because this information will tell about the school success or the quality of their teaching (Brown, 2009). The fourth is the conception of irrelevance, or Brown (2009) refers to it as anti-purpose assessment. In this case, teachers perceive that their assessment is unimportant for students' learning and teaching, or their assessment methods are not reliable and valid (Brown, 2009). These conceptions of assessment became a foundation Conceptions of Assessment Inventory, using which Brown conducted numerous studies in a different country.

Thus, one of studies conducted by Brown (2004) on New Zealand primary teachers revealed that participants generally had a perception that assessment improves learning and makes school accountable for achieving expected outcomes. Most teachers rejected the conception that assessment has no purposes and irrelevant, and that assessment was for student accountability. The study indicated that teachers' conception of assessment is relatively stable and generable regardless school or teacher demographic characteristics. The implications of this study are that the advancement of assessment policy should include recognition of teaching, and rises appropriate response to teachers' conceptions of assessment.

Similar studies were conducted in Egypt, China, and Cyprus (Brown & Michaelides, 2011; Brown, Hui, & Kennedy, 2011; Gabriel & Brown, 2014). The study in China (Brown, Hui, & Kennedy, 2011) revealed that conception of accountability is strongly connected with the improvement conception. Thus, it could be noted that Chinese

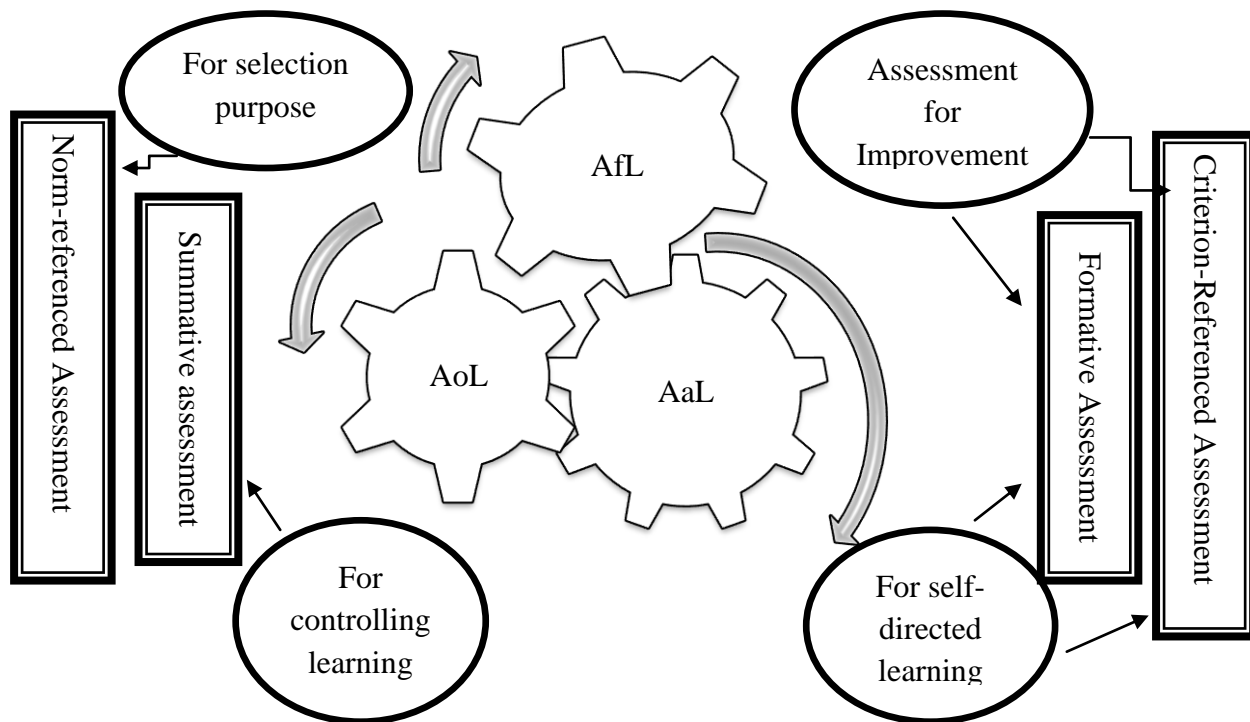
teachers views that examinations improves students' learning. Authors (Brown et al., 2011) connected it with the Chinese philosophy of education. Similarly, in the study in Egypt it was revealed that Egyptian teachers had the school accountability conception, and this was also strongly correlated with improvement conception. Authors (Gebril & Brown, 2014) assume that this might because of Islamic education, which is highly focused on memorization of religious texts (p. 11). In contrast, study on Cyprus teachers' conception of assessment identified that teachers tend to believe that assessment is used in order to improve students' learning, and therefore a valid way to evaluate "school and teacher performance" (Brown & Michaelides, 2011). It's clear from this study that assessment conceptions differ from one country to another. Teachers' assessment perceptions and experiences are influenced by social and cultural factors. What is more important, in all studies teachers believe that assessment should improve teaching and learning. However, their methods of improving learning or their assessment practices differ.

The discussion stated above will be followed up in the next section in the form of conceptual framework.

### **Conceptual Framework**

In the previous chapter, I reviewed literature drawing on the overarching research question. Key ideas were discussed to explore how teachers understand and practice assessment approaches. This section presents a description of the key ideas used throughout the literature review, and which is going to be used in the coming chapters. Key ideas are presented in the figure below.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



This figure shows three main assessment approaches which are Assessment for Learning, Assessment as Learning, and Assessment of Learning. According to reviewed literature, teachers believe and use these assessment approaches for different purposes. Namely, for selection, controlling, improvement, and for purpose to make students self-directed learners. Selection purpose of assessment could be referred as norm-referenced assessment. This purpose of assessment predominately is used for summative purposes, to select the ‘the best of the best’. The next purpose of assessment is to control students’ learning and teachers’ work. The purposes of assessment to improve learning and teaching, and to make students self-directed learners could be referred as formative assessment. Reviewed literature showed that in formative assessment giving feedback and setting criteria are key elements of this assessment. Definition of the named above terms are given below.

- **Assessment** is “the process of forming a judgment about the quality and extent of student achievement or performance” (Baud, 2007, p. 20).

- **Assessment of Learning** is summative in nature and is used to confirm what students know and can do, to demonstrate whether they have achieved the curriculum outcomes, and, occasionally, to show how they are placed in relation to others. Teachers concentrate on ensuring that they have used assessment to provide accurate and sound statements of students' proficiency, so that the recipients of the information can use the information to make reasonable and defensible decisions (Earl & Katz, 2006, p. 14)
- **Assessment for Learning** is designed to give teachers information to modify and differentiate teaching and learning activities (Earl & Katz, 2006, p. 13)
- **Assessment as learning** “assessment is not merely an adjunct to teaching and learning but offers a process through which pupil involvement in assessment can feature as part of learning that is assessment as learning’ (Dann, 2002, p. 153).”
- **Assignment** – coursework usually undertaken by a student or students in their own time and not under controlled conditions (Bloxham & Boyd, 2007, p. 13)
- **Assessment criteria** - “statements describing aspects which will be taken into account in judging as assessment task” (Bloxham & Boyd, 2007, p. 232)
- **Assessment task** – any item of assessment whether examination, test, coursework or direct observation (Bloxham & Boyd, 2007, p. 13).
- **Credit** – a quantitative measure of learning equivalence, which is awarded to a learner in recognition of the achievement of a unit of study at a specified level. (Bloxham & Boyd, 2007, p. 232)
- **Criterion-referenced** assessment is determining the quality of a pupil's performance by comparing it to pre-established standards of mastery (Airasian, 1994, p.425). Firmly linked to outcome based learning in that students achievement



is tested against a set of criteria such as those linked to the learning outcomes for the assignment (Bloxham & Boyd, 2007, p. 82)

- **Deep learning** - an approach to learning where students try to go beyond the surface of the subject matter and understand the underlying meaning. They may not remember all the details, but they will develop an understanding of ideas and concepts, often by linking them prior to knowledge or experience (Bloxham & Boyd, 2007, p. 233).
- **Examination** – an assessment task undertaken under controlled conditions (Bloxham & Boyd, 2007, p. 13).
- **Feedback** is information about the gap between the actual level and the reference level of a system parameter which is used to alter the gap in some way. (Ramaprasad, 1983, p. 4)
- **Formative Assessment** is judgment which has the aim “... to provide feedback and correctives at each stage in the teaching-learning process” (Bloom, 1969, p. 48)
- **Grading** “refers to the evaluation of student achievement on a larger scale, either for a single major piece of work or for an entire course, subject, unit or module within a degree program.” (Sadler, 2005, p. 177).
- **Marking** to refer to “the processes of representing student achievements by numbers or symbols” (Sadler, 2005, p. 177).
- **Norm-referenced assessment** is determining the quality of a pupil’s performance by comparing it to the performance of other pupils (Airasian, 1994, p.426). Aims to discriminate across a range, so that those who do better on the assessment task receive higher grades than those who do less well (Bowden & Marton, 1998, p. 162).

- **Peer-assessment** – feedback or grades (or both) to their peers on a product, process, or performance, based on the criteria of excellence for that product or even which students may have been involved in determining (Falchikov, 2007, p. 132) where students assess one another during class activities (Harris & McCann, 1994, p.91).
- **Self-Directed Learning** – a learning during which “students must be able to plan and direct their own learning in order to be able to pursue learning situations without assistance of the teacher” (Tan, 2007, p. 115).
- **Self-assessment** - Assessment carried out by students themselves designed to measure their performance and progress (Harris & McCann, 1994, p. 92).
- **Student’s learning**: promoting learning by motivating students, steering their approach to learning and giving the teacher useful information to inform changes in teaching strategies (Bloxham & Boyd, 2007, p. 31)
- **Summative assessment** is judgment which encapsulates all the evidence up to a given point. This point is seen as finality at the point of the judgment. A summative assessment can have various functions which do not impinge on the process (Taras, 2010, p. 468).
- **Surface learning** – an approach to learning where students focus on the details in a lecture or text. They attempt to memorise those details rather than understand the meaning of the topic or concept. Consequently, they can quickly forget the material (Bloxham & Boyd, 2007, p. 236)

## **Chapter 3: Research Methodology**

### **Introduction**

In this chapter, I describe research methodology, by presenting research design and justification for its selection, sampling procedure and selection, data collection procedure and data analysis. The last section presents the ethical considerations of the current study.

### **Research Design**

In this section, I describe the research design of the study. This study uses a qualitative research approach, described by Creswell (2011) as “is an inquiry approach useful for exploring and understanding a central phenomenon” (p. 625). My research includes qualitative instruments such as interviews and document analysis. A qualitative research approach is justified in my study because it allowed me to understand better how participants perceive their assessment beliefs and practices.

Within qualitative research design, I employed case study, which provided me with in-depth understanding of the central phenomenon (Cousin, 2005). Thus, according to Ashley (2012),

The strength of case study research lies in its ability to enable the researcher to intensively investigate the case in-depth, to probe, drill down and get at its complexity, often though long term immersion in, or repeated visits to/encounters with the case (p. 102).

Furthermore, as university teachers beliefs and practices have not been researched yet in Kazakhstan, it is better to use case study design because as Ashley argues, the aim of this study could be “to explore a phenomenon about which much is not known, or to describe something in detail” (Ashley, 2012, p. 102).

However, using the case study is time-consuming because of conducting long-time interviews, transcribing and translating interviews. In this sense, limited numbers of people

were involved in this study. Consequently, there is a risk that findings can be dismissed by policy makers due to the following reasons: “the sample was too small; it’s not like that elsewhere; the researchers were biased, etc” (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2011, pp. 9-10). Nevertheless, the case study design allowed me to gather the important and in-depth information on teachers’ assessment beliefs and practices.

### **Site and Sampling**

In this section, I describe research site where I conducted my study and also procedures of how I chose participants for the study. In addition, I also present the participants of the study by providing their background information.

**Research site.** The research site of this case study is one university from West Kazakhstan. The center of West Kazakhstan is Oral town (see Appendix A). It is small town with population of approximately more than 300, 000 people. There are two state universities, and five private universities in Oral. I select one state university for my study, which enacts credit transfer technology system close to European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). This university is one of the oldest universities in Kazakhstan which offers education in many specialties.

**Research Sample.** Five university teachers were purposefully recruited from university in Oral. According to Patton (as cited in Mears, 2012) researchers use purposeful sampling to select “information-rich cases... those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research” (p. 171). I selected university instructors of different subjects. I also decided to select the instructors with minimum five years of teaching experience so that they could compare their previous assessment beliefs and practices.

In order to select these participants, I first got a permission of their dean. Thus, I sent an information letter for deans of three departments: Department of History and Law,

Department of Economy and Management, and Department of Philology and Pedagogy.

This letter included the following information: (1) the reasons for conducting study at their university (2), number and duration of interviews (and (3) how I would take care of research ethics including confidentiality. After gaining permission, I met with instructors of three departments to explain the purpose of my study and invite them to participate in my research. When few instructors from each department showed their interest, I selected one instructor from each department. I then introduced to them informed consent forms which were signed by them and me, and a copy of the signed informed consent form was given to each participant (see Appendix B).

As stated above, the selected participants were the university instructors with minimum five years of teaching experience. The first instructor has six years of year teaching experience. She is from Department of History and Law, and she teaches the courses on Criminal Law of Kazakhstan, Tax Law of Kazakhstan and Law-Enforcement Authorities. The second instructor has more than 40 years of teaching experience. She is a professor at the Department of Social-Political Disciplines. She teaches the following courses: Modern Conflicts and Methods of Conflict Resolution, History of Arabian Countries. The third instructor is also from Department of Social-Political Disciplines. She has been working in this university for 19 years. She teaches such disciplines as Geopolitics, History of Ancient World, Middle Age History, and American History. The next instructor works at Finance Department. She has 15 years of teaching experience at a university plus five more years of teaching at vocational school. The last but not the least instructor is from Department of Russian Philology. She teaches courses such as Russian language for Kazakh-medium groups, and Morphology of Russian language. She has 11 years of working experience in higher education.

The following table presents the detailed background information about the participants of the study.

**Table 1:** Information on Participants of the Study

Pseudonyms	Years of experience	Department	Courses
Law teacher	More than 6 years	Department of Law	Criminal Law of Kazakhstan
Arabic history teacher	more than 40 years	Department of Socio-Political Disciplines	History of Arabian countries
American history teacher	19 years	Department of Socio-Political Disciplines	History of American countries
Finance teacher	15 years	Department of Finance	Financial Disciplines
Russian language teacher	11 years	Department of Russian Literature and Language	Russian language

## Data Collection

Data collection started on the 10 March, 2014 and lasted for two weeks. I interviewed five university teachers for three times each of them and in total 15 interviews were conducted. After collecting the data, I transcribed all 15 interviews and began to analyze it. This section presents data collection instruments I used to collect data.

**Interview.** The first instrument I used to collect data is interviews. This is because, as I mentioned above, I conducted a qualitative case study research. To answer to the research question, I used semi-structured interviews. What is more important, and useful thing in using semi-structured interviews, is that you can ask follow-up questions asking participants to explain or give some example of information they mentioned. In this sense, Mears (2012) refers to semi-structured interviews as in-depth interviews and described it as follows:

In-depth interviews are purposeful interactions in which an investigator attempts to learn what another person knows about a topic, to discover and record what that

person has experienced, what he or she thinks and feels about it, and what significance and meaning it might have (p. 170).

I designed 35 questions for the interviews (see Appendix C). Semi-structured interview questions were divided into three parts. This is because, I conducted three interviews with each instructor.

**Piloting interviews.** Before the actual interviews, I piloted the interview questions. Three Master students of GSE agreed to participate in piloting interviews. These participants worked as university instructors before joining master program. One interview lasted for about one hour or less. I asked them about their past and current assessment experiences and beliefs. The most interesting and useful thing was the follow up questions. The follow up questions allowed me to go in-depth, and to gather interesting data. This piloting showed me that semi-structured interviews are the most appropriate instrument of data collection. In the end of interview, I asked participants if my questions were clear for them, and if the sequence of question was good. According to their feedback, I revised some questions. In addition, I changed sequence of questions. In this way, I divided questions into three blocks such as teachers' past assessment beliefs and experiences, teachers' present assessment beliefs and experiences, and teachers' perspectives on assessment.

After revising my interview questions, I started to conduct interviews with my research participants. The initial interviews focused on teachers' assessment beliefs and experiences in the past educational system before introducing credit technology transfer system. The first interviews lasted for about 40 minutes. All the interviews were recorded with the participants' consent.

The first interviews had some challenges such as finding a suitable room for interviews and instructors' initial apprehension to be interviewed. All five instructors

asked me if they could see interview questions before hand so that they could be prepared ahead of time. This is because they were faced with an interview-based study for the first time, and I always had to remind them that I want to hear just what they think about assessment, and how they actually practice assessment.

The second cycle of interviews went quite well. Teachers felt more relaxed, and so did I. The second interviews lasted for about one hour. I asked teachers 18 questions from the interview protocol and follow up questions as well on their current assessment perceptions and practices. Teachers replied for questions more openly and confidently. Friendly atmosphere helped to share their assessment challenges. However, sometimes they did not understand my interview questions, and I had to explain them what I meant by that particular question.

The last cycle of interviews lasted for about 30 minutes. I asked nine questions about their future perspectives on assessment, or on how they would like to assess students in the future. Teachers shared their beliefs about their assessment ideas. During the last interview, I also asked them to share the syllabus of any course they taught. The teachers shared with me not only with their syllabuses, but also with some methodological guidebook for university teachers. Syllabuses and teachers' methodological guidebook served as a basis for the second instrument of the study.

In the end, I presented them books in order to thank them for willingness to participate in the study, and for their time dedicated for interviews.

**Document analysis.** The second instrument of the study is document analyses. Document analysis was used for triangulation purposes (Creswell, 2012). As I described above, I used syllabuses and methodology guidebook of interviewed teachers for document analyses. Syllabuses of teachers reflect teachers' assessment strategy or assessment policy. I examined how interviewed teachers' assessment strategies differ, and



presented it in the findings chapter. In addition, teachers' methodological guides gave some description of the current educational system, and teaching and learning techniques university used.

All these gathered data from interviews and documents allowed me to respond to the research question and achieve the purpose of the study. The collected data was analyzed using appropriate techniques, which will be described, in the next section.

### **Data Analysis Approach**

In this section, I explain how I managed and analyzed the gathered data. According to Yin (2009), the analysis of the case study is one of “the most difficult aspects of doing case study the most difficult part of case study” (p. 127). This was true for me as well.

All interviews were recorded on my phone recorder with permission of participants. I saved all recorded files in my laptop, and then deleted it from my phone. The next step was transcribing all 15 interviews. It was difficult to transcribe them because sometimes it was not clear what the participant said. More importantly, it took too much time to transcribe each interview. Duration of interviews ranged from 30 minutes to one hour. Once I transcribed interviews, I read thoroughly each transcript in order to get sense of the each interview. After that I started to code interviews, and combined codes into themes. Then, considering themes I made, I developed four categories. These existing categories were teachers' previous assessment beliefs and practices, description of the current educational system, teachers' current assessment beliefs and practices, and assessment challenges (see Appendix D).

### **Ethical Considerations**

In this section I will describe ethical considerations of the study. In particular, I describe how I got permission for conducting this study and protected confidentiality and anonymity of the research participants and data they shared.

After developing the research proposal of the study, I used that information to prepare the NUGSE Ethics Form (attached in the beginning of this thesis after a title page). On this approval form, I explained the purpose of the study and stated research question of the study. In addition, I described briefly the research design, sampling, and instruments of the study. Information on how I was going to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of participants was fully described in the approval form. This research was approved on 6<sup>th</sup> of March, 2014 by NUGSE Research Committee.

Important to this ethics review was my Consent Form. Informed consent forms included the purpose of the study (1), the benefits in participation in the study (2), information about methods of the study (3), time which will be allocated for interviews (4), guarantee of confidentiality (5), and my and thesis supervisor contact numbers (6). This consent form was very useful when I came to the research site. I could convince participants of the study that they would not take any risks. I explained them that their names would not be used in the study, and all gathered data, both in hard copy and soft copy, would be stored and locked. This helped me to make participants of the study more confident and as a result I could lead them to more friendly talk, during which they started to share their challenges. I locked my laptop and only I knew the password to start to work on laptop. Overall, I can assure that I kept all promises I gave to my participants. The only thing is left that after six month of the research I will delete all gathered data. I will do it as soon as I submit my thesis.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter was to discuss about how I gathered data, and answered to the overarching research question, and also to explain the rational to use methods I described. As it was written above, the chapter started with introducing research design, describing selection of participants, and explaining research methods I used. Next I wrote

on how I analyzed the gathered data. Finally, I described ethical considerations of the study. All these procedures stated above established a foundation for discussion of the next chapters Findings and Discussion.

## **Chapter 4: Findings of the Study**

### **Introduction**

This chapter presents the findings of the study. This study has the goal to explore teachers' assessment beliefs and practices. The gathered data were analyzed and divided into four major categories such as teachers' previous assessment beliefs and practices, description of the current system, teachers' current assessment beliefs and practice, and teachers' assessment challenges.

### **Teachers' Previous Assessment Beliefs and Practices**

All five teachers experienced old assessment system. Almost all teachers, except Law teacher, taught and evaluated students in the previous educational system. Law teacher experienced the previous assessment only being a student. Despite the fact that they have been teaching for many years, they do not have any courses on assessment methods. In this regard, one of these teachers commented, "We did not have any in-service assessment trainings". Thus, these teachers gained ideas about assessment from their student's experience. One of them maintained:

When we were students we observed how our teachers taught and evaluated us.

We learned from that experience by borrowing the teaching methods which seemed more acceptable and interesting for us. That is how we started to apply in practice.

While mentioning about previous assessment experiences, this teacher referred to assessment as to willingness to get the highest grades, and therefore assessment for her was "a little spirit of competitiveness. The desire to be one of the best...As all we were girls, each of us raised hands, and there was a need to present something better, to search something interesting".

The old assessment system can be described as the summative assessment method. The teachers in this study mentioned that as students they used to have final oral

examination which could be referred as a high-stakes examination. On examination day students come to examination hall in turn and take a card with questions and they respond to those questions after a brief preparation. As Finance teacher observed, “Examination was a rigorous process and students had to prepare for it by studying all the course content from the beginning to the end”. Students would take final examination and based on that they would get course grades. Their performance during the semesters was often not counted in the final examination. One of the teachers described it in the following way, “Students could miss classes, and come to the final examination to get a grade”, and another teacher added “students would have fun from examination session to another session”.

However, there were students who were interested in studying during the semester because they could get the excellent mark on the final examination, or some university teachers would give an excellent mark automatically to some students who performed exceptionally without having them to go to the final examination. A university teacher said, “Some of us were studying and we wanted to get “*avtomat*”<sup>1</sup> rather than to take examination”. The same teacher observed that students would learn much and gain in-depth knowledge while getting ready for the oral examination.

The teachers also referred to the old assessment system as the “linear” system. According to Law teachers, the “linear system was the system when lectures and seminars lasted for 80 minutes, there were not students individual work and students individual work with teachers [the current system does have]. And the first rating was 25 points.” This was a transition period between the old system and the new system in 2000s. The

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*Avtomat* was a term used popularly when a university instructor would award an automatic good grade to particular students who performed exemplary during the lecturers and practical seminars. Those students would not have to take examination.

transition of assessment system was based mostly on the old assessment system and on some elements of the current assessment policy, which is accumulating points.

These five teachers indicated that the old assessment method consisted of the different activities. Predominantly, the assessment activities such as attending lectures, writing assignments, oral replies on seminars, and the oral examination. As Arabic history teacher commented, “In our time we made a lot of written notes. For each subject we submitted our written notes as a mini subtotal presentations. Different notes....Oral replies on seminars. The seminar classes were also fruitful. Indeed we had discussions.” Some teachers had well-developed assessment approaches. According to American history teacher, “Annotating the literature, conducting games, events...each instructor had own individual approach.” In addition, Finance teacher claimed:

We had control works, recitations, and the examinations were passed using the card system. You know, the oral examination was in the form of discussion. This is because we could not check the students’ residual knowledge by the tests. And when the leading and additional questions were posed we prepared thoroughly. But now we use tests, but of course tests do not show the deep knowledge.

However, Arabic history teacher was one of the first teachers who started to use tests as the assessment activity. She started to use tests in the period when oral examinations, oral replies and taking notes were the main assessment activities. In this sense, she commented:

I’ve been trying to find out other forms. What would catch them, how to increase their interest in order to have not just formal classes. And because of this, I began to search something. Therefore, I started by designing tests. We had not used the tests before...I thought that I could improve the quality of evaluation. I introduced it in the end, well, in the mid-90s.

Not only tests were new assessment activity. Further, she continued modifying her assessment approach, and introduced another for that time assessment approach. She described it in the following words:

I started to invent other methods. I read, searched many methods, read the literature on it. Well, I borrowed something from physics teacher. I do not know how but I found that physics teachers used poetry. ...If a student wrote a poem it means he has been working on the theme he studied. He would be sweating because of putting a lot of efforts to broaden his understanding from the lectures. He would be searching for additional information to prepare seminar questions. Thus, poetry writing could be useful tool to assess students.

According to Arabic history teacher, the goal of this kind of assessment using poetry was not to "simply keep information about something, but to let it go through their head, to analyze, and to have different variants of explanations." In addition to this new form of assessment activity she designed her own assessment policy based on accumulating points in the end of 1990s, "In general, I gave a point for each theme. Then I summarized these points. Then I divided the summarized points to the quantity of the assignments. Generally, I started it in the late 90's."

Enthusiasm of Arabic history teacher made her to find out new methods of students' assessment in order to increase their interest in studying which cannot be refer to other teachers. Teachers, also, described their previous assessment experience mostly in a positive way. Most of teachers indicated that, one of the important advantages of the old assessment practices was that teachers had a plenty of time to check students' homework. They had a lot of time to listen to students' responses. In this sense, Finance teacher commented, "First of all we had 90 minutes seminar classes. We had the opportunity to quiz students. And they had a possibility to reply on each seminar class." To the question

what kind of creative tasks did you give to students, Arabian history replied that, composing rhymed texts, making reports, conducting game, and described it in the following way:

Each took for the one role, collected materials, documentary materials, some ...

Collecting materials meant that he was ready to defend the position of that person.

The second day we listened the position of the prosecution. And then we decided how to assess the performance of that person for the country and the world community. It was really interesting...And students had time to read a huge amount of literature. These were effective classes.

She emphasized, that she could conduct these games owing to having time for classes, and claimed “in that period I have a lot of time. I had the possibility to give the assignments, and to check the work of each student.”

However, the old assessment policy had its advantages and disadvantages, which might the reason why it was replaced by the new assessment policy.

**Disadvantages of the previous assessment methods.** The teachers mentioned about disadvantages of their previous assessment practices.

Speaking about the disadvantage of the old assessment policy, all five teachers indicated about the weaknesses of the 5-point assessment scale. Most teachers indicated ineffectiveness of the 5-point assessment scale. In this sense, Arabic history teacher reported that “well, we grades such as 5, 4, 3, 2 and it is not perfect system. It is imperfect system. There are many great works among them. Moreover, there is no graduation.” This could not allow teachers to assess more widely in terms of the students’ work. For example, mostly teachers used the grades 5, 4, and 3. Only the best works could be evaluated for 5 points. Grade 4 was given to those students whose work were close to excellent but not excellent. This is means that only few of them could get 5 points.



Another disadvantage of the previous assessment was the nature of students' work and the expectations for students' assessment. Due to summative assessment, students were not motivated to do their lessons throughout the year, but prepare for the final examination only. In this regard, Finance teacher claimed that in the previous educational system it was possible for students to skip sessions and not attend lectures, and not to work on seminar classes. Students could come and just pass the oral examination and got a grade.

In this way, all of them stated the disadvantage of 5 point scale, and argued for that 100-point scale is the right assessment policy. However due to cutting teaching hours, they have not enough time for evaluating students' work. This and other characteristics of the current assessment policy will be discussed in the next section under the category description of the current system.

### **Description of the Current System**

After the decision of Kazakhstan to join the Bologna process, there were many changes in the higher education sector. Thus, implementing credit system of education similar to ECTS was one of them. The main goal of credit system is student's' individual work, their ability to work with literature, and developing their research skills. By examining the documents of university, in particularly the methodology guides for teachers, it became clear that there is much emphasize on student individual work. This might come from requirements of the Bologna Process to promote life-long learning through students' self-directed learning.

One of the main changes of assessment is related to the reducing of teaching hours. If previously lectures lasted for 80 minutes, currently it lasts for 50 minutes. This is related to the adding of new concepts such as student individual work with teachers. It is called it *Samostoyatelnayarabotastudenta s prepodavatelem* (SRSP). Student individual work with

teachers is similar to tutorials in the European universities. However, the difference between tutorials and SRSP is that SRSP is a form of classes during which teachers also assign additional tasks for students, and during SRSP students present their assignments. This is according to teachers who indicated that each type of classes should be evaluated. In addition, assignments for SRSP are stated in teachers' syllabuses.

There is also, another type of assessment activity, except lectures, seminars, and SRSP, is students individual work, which is known as *samostoyatelnayarabotastudenta* (SRS). However, this is not compulsory, but additional assessment activity, which requires students research skills.

This guide consists of many articles on how to organize students' individual work, how to motivate them to work individually, but there is nothing about the assessments methods. In addition, teachers' syllabuses have only assessment strategy, but there are no set requirements, or criteria for assignments. What is more important, all syllabuses are identical.

There are also new assessment policies such as the change of grading requirements. Nowadays, teachers write in their syllabus that the final grade of student is consists of two stages. The first stage of the assessment is the scores accumulated during the learning process (formative assessment), and it forms 60 % of the final grades. This 60 % is divided into two ratings, and in the middle of the semester, they have midterm examinations: on the 7th week, and on the 15th week. The other 40 % is the scores accumulated on the final examination (summative assessment). The university has the unified final examination form, which is the comprehensive multiple-choice test. The final grade is evaluated according to the following formula:  $U = [(P1 + P2) / 2] * 0.6 + E * 0.4$  where P1 is the scores from the first rating, P2 is the scores of the second rating, and E – is the scores gained on the final examination (Syllabus).

The most important change was introducing 100 point scale. On this point, Law teacher stated,

If we compare the old assessment policy with the current, it is certainly true that the current 100-point assessment scale gives more opportunity for students... There is a significant difference between students. The difference in one point is not so significant. However, when it is 75 and 80, then we feel the difference in 5 points. And I think is it right.

Arabic history teachers, similar with other teachers, claimed, “Nowadays we have the correct system in this regard. 100 points and 90 points - it is still five. But the work is different work. .... The only thing is that it is formally applied”. To the question why she thinks that it is formally applied due to lack of time and students workload, she explained in this way:

Not enough time to give a task and to check it properly. According to syllabus I have 15 lectures. I have to manage everything. Then how to inquire, if you have 15 lectures. We give many tasks. In addition, every teacher gives many tasks. It is hard for students to manage all the assignment with quality of 100 point – it is unreal. Therefore, considering the fact it is relative evaluation, we put the normal 100 points, well that I can have four cases, when I put rightly, that it is a creative, full good job.

According to syllabus, the highest score for each assessment activity is 100%, and the scores for the first ratings, and the second are the mean scores. The mean score is the sum of all score divided into its quantity. In addition, it should be noted that teachers evaluate each classes. The three are two main classes: lectures, and seminar, and other classes which are not scheduled are SRSP, and SRS. Even SRSP and SRS are not scheduled, there are assignments, which should be submitted and evaluated. Thus, in one

of the teacher's syllabuses it is written that SRSP is a form of activity during which students can present their replies on a given themes, and it should be done only in the oral form. SRS is a form of activity, which requires making some reports, or "*referats*<sup>2</sup>".

After analyzing university documents and teachers' perception on the current educational system, it became clear that there was a move from a teacher-centered to student-centered learning. In this way, as teachers apply the named above educational reforms, there could be change in their assessment beliefs and practices as well. Thus, the next section will be focused on teachers' current assessment beliefs and practice.

### **Teachers' Current Assessment Beliefs and Practices**

This section is about the teachers' current assessment beliefs and practices. The section is presented according to the following themes: teachers' current assessment beliefs and teachers' current assessment practices.

**Teachers' assessment beliefs.** The study explored the teachers' assessment beliefs and the findings are as follows. According to Law teacher, assessment is the product of what she "gave" to her students and what she would have in the end. She believes that assessment has a controlling function, "owing to assessment we find out whether we achieved the result of study or not." This means that teachers view assessment and its role as a controlling function. Finance teacher also defined assessment as a control of residual knowledge. She claimed, "It firstly checks residual knowledge of the students. Explaining them the theoretical material. How they have mastered. The degree of mastering." Her definition of assessment stresses the role of teaching. 'Residual knowledge' according to finance teacher is "the amount of knowledge that remains in the mind of the student after the theoretical and practical materials. Unfortunately if they get 30% remained knowledge

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It is a written assignment in which students choose a topic and write their work. the idea is the students should do creative work by searching materials. However, students often write referats formally, i.e. by copying from different sources including from internet.

of the material during the studying of the discipline, it is believed that students have mastered the subject.” Assessment for Finance teacher seems to be a measure with help of which she knows how much her students know. Similarly, Russian language teacher views assessment as a measurement, but she has more explicit and wide understanding of it. According to her, it measures not only knowledge, but also the obtained skills and abilities. This is consistent with how American history teacher defined assessment:

Assessment of students is the control of acquired knowledge during the studying process. This is an ability to control teachers’ work. In what he succeeded, and in what he did not succeed. For example, why a particular student shows a poor knowledge. Assessment means the opportunity to evaluate students’ work, and your own work as well.

Thus, Finance teacher indicated that assessment is evaluation of their work, which is consistent with what other teachers view about assessment role in teaching.

In addition, some of teachers believe that assessment is about students’ accountability for their learning. On this point, Russian language teacher stated that assessment for her is “the evaluation of the level of preparedness for classes, evaluation of the certain skills which they acquired, and of the ability that they have received during the course, and as far as they are able to apply it in practice.” In addition, American history teacher stated, “it is important for students to get good marks, good marks means high rating, and high rating means the opportunity to get a good mark on the final examination. In my opinion, this is the most important thing for them.” Thus, most of teachers argue that assessment is on behalf of students. Assessment makes them accountable for their learning because they are interested to have good grades. In this sense, assessment has the administrative aim to make student accountable for their study. One of teachers stressed the role of assessment in the following way,

Assessment is our tool to influence students. Not having this capability, you cannot force a student to study. I do not know why, maybe it is our mentality. They cannot study just because I need to study, or I need to gain knowledge, so that is why I'm learning. Assessment turned out to level of influence.

American history teacher also argued that the very first aim of assessment to “stimulate learning process and knowledge. If there is no assessment, then students can afford somewhere not prepare for classes, skip somewhere. If there is the control such as grading system, then students will be disciplined.”

However, Arabic history teacher views assessment as a tool for fostering students to learn. In this sense, she indicated assessment as:

The opportunity to use it for more increased interest to the courses, disciplines, informal relationships, the desire to go beyond what is given in the studying sessions. To enable students to show their level of achievement, mental abilities. Give some impetus to the creative leap. This is ideally.

As we see for Arabic history teacher, assessment is an instrument for increasing students' interest to study. She also added that assessment means, “Increasing the motivation to study, to make students to learn individually. To make students to perform tasks and to obtain knowledge individually.” Defining assessment, she stressed on the student individual work, on the importance of their ability to work individually. She might view assessment as a tool for fostering students to study further because of students' increased interest to get a good mark.

Improving students' learning is consistent with assessment goals of Arabic history teacher. However, if other teachers foster their learning using the administrative methods, Arabic history tries to foster their learning owing to increasing their interest to study. She stated:

I should focus them on thinking about something. For example, I declare theme, and we think together. Discuss the issues of this theme, and may be students will be engaged to this, and will get an interest to read more about it. The only way is to catch their interest. Cause some concern. Otherwise, I do not have time to give, or dictate some important materials, or I will use students thinking. What is more important? For the last time, I think that more important is the second. ..Then I suppose that assessment will be quite different.

She also stated, since the aim of the course is to improve students' individual work, assessment should serve for this aim. In this sense, she argued,

I keep saying that, most importantly what you need to learn - is to learn to doubt. Is it true? And is it written rightly? Student should search for different descriptions and get interested, begin to doubt, and then he will read more and will think deliberately. Consequently, the form of assessment will be changed in this direction. If I aimed to this, I need an instrument to check it.

As for Arabic history teacher, assessment goal is to serve the aims of the course. If university, or the whole higher education system has the aim to increase students' individual work, assessment methods should not be a separate thing. In contrast, it should facilitate this aim. As an example of how she is going to do it, Arabic history told that she would change test questions, which checks students thinking rather than just memorizing.

Furthermore, Russian language teacher told that one way of improving student's ability to work individually is making them accountable for their study with a help of self-awareness about their learning progress. She continued and emphasized that another important task of assessment is to:

Evaluate students in order to let them know their level of knowledge. If today he received a low point ball, then for him it should be an incentive to excel.

Understand that this knowledge is not sufficient, and it is necessary to deepen it.

However, in the same time Russian language teacher contradicts herself, and she claimed that assessment has a less importance for learning. She argued that learning itself is important,

Assessment is not so important. What is more important is the process of learning, it is important, how much the student has learned this or that, and then later we go to evaluation. At the initial stage of the learning process, learning itself is important.

In this way, almost all teachers indicated the significance of assessment for teaching and learning. From the discussion above it is clear that one of the goals of assessment is motivate students to learn further. Thus, one way to motivate students is their will to get high scores. In such a way, this facilitates to gain access for the final examination. On this point, Law teacher argued, “If they have less than 50 scores they are not allowed to pass the final examination”. She continued that they are interested in getting the high scores during the semester because if they fail the final examination, they should take this course again and pay for credits.

Another way that motivates students learning is discounts for tuition fee. Thus, Law teacher explained that if students show good results, then their tuition fees will be reduced. This means that assessment policy and tuition policy of university raises students’ interest to study well during the whole semester. She continued that the scores are important because they want to get a diploma with good grades as their future work depends on it. Almost all teachers think that what stimulates students to study is getting a good grade.



More importantly, many teachers believe that sometimes overestimating students' work helps to increase students' learning. For example, when Arabic teacher shared with the classroom assessment experience, she told that she graded one student only for her wish to reply firstly,

I estimate one student, but it is only 90 score, because she answered well, she has materials for all questions, but her reply is still not perfect. And for her will to be the first volunteer to present, I overestimated her work, and give a good score.

Although I should not do it.

Arabic history teacher also explained that she always estimates students for their diligence and effort not for the quality of work because she always is not satisfied by their work, "I'm usually not satisfied with the quality. I can never estimate anyone for 100 scores, and I estimate them for their diligence, for effort and for progress. I very rarely satisfied by the quality of work." In this sense, Finance teacher claimed that when she gives a good mark this stimulates students to study.

In addition, American history teacher argued that students are different, and therefore it is important to evaluate students' "individual abilities." For example, according to her some students may be do not know and understand the theme, but they made a lot of work writing the notes. In this case, she told, "I assess more for their efforts". In addition, there are talented students who may be will not as much as others do but in the same time, "you feel that he knows the material." This means that she does not have unique assessment criteria for all students. She understands that students have different abilities and always tries to stimulate their learning by giving them good grades.

From the discussion, we see that these teachers view that giving good grades stimulates students to learn further. However, this cannot refer to Russian language teacher. In contrast, she thinks that when students get bad grades this will be a motivation

for them to study better. Considering participants perception on assessment, it could be concluded that majority of them believe that assessment improves teaching and learning. However, they view that the role of assessment is to control their leaning, and this helps to improve students' learning. Only Arabic history teacher believe that in order to improve students' learning and their ability to learn individually assessment approach should be appropriate. In addition, most of teachers believe that assessment methods should evaluate not only knowledge or understanding but also students' diligence and effort to study.

Nevertheless, due to lack of knowledge on assessment methods, teachers' beliefs on assessment to improve teaching and learning remain ineffective on practice. Thus, teachers' assessment practices will be in the center of discussion in the next subsection.

**Teachers' Assessment Practices.** The findings showed that the teachers' current assessment practices are a mixture of both traditional and new assessment practices. These five teachers in the study use both 'assessment of learning' (AoL) and 'assessment for learning' (AfL). For AfL, or the formative assessment, they use seminar questions as the main assessment activity. These teachers check knowledge and understanding of their students during seminars by asking them questions. As Law teacher stated, "Students have to prepare and write answers to seminar questions in their copybooks, and present them orally in class."

In addition, there are other types of assessment tasks. Students work on various assignments such as preparing comparative tables, reports and presentations. For instance, Law teacher assignment such as designing a glossary of juridical terms, and learning it by heart and present this assignment in class. Another teacher also mentioned that she assigns students to prepare political games. Interestingly, Arabic history teacher divides her assessment tasks according to their purposes of assessment tasks. She divides the

assessment tasks into two types: productive and reproductive tasks. According to another teacher, a reproductive task is:

When you need to memorize the material and present it correctly, This is because we have a history course and a you need to know and remember many things....Productive when you can do a scientific work. For example to make a table. Here we can compare a lot of different material, select the material, and match it

However, Arabic history claimed that for the last time she uses mostly the reproductive assignment tasks because of the limited time, and only few students can gain the highest scores when they do the productive assignment tasks. On this point, she argued that she wants to return to the previous system because it allowed her to assign students mostly productive tasks. The reason for that, teacher stressed, is cutting teaching hours, and she cannot handle it.

Russian language teacher uses quite different written assignments except taking notes, or writing conspectus such as grammar exercises, and dictations. This is because she is a language teacher. It should be noted, that she assigns tasks to students considering their level of the Russian language. The lower level, the easier tasks she gives.

All five teachers shared with some examples of a classroom assessment as I asked them to describe one of the assessment activities from class. I asked this question in order to get more detailed data about the assessment practice. Thus, Law teacher described the classroom assessment in the following way:

One student prepared for seminar classes not considering the changes in legislation... He used the outdated material from the Internet. Even if I told them on lecture that there have been changes in the law, and prepare for classes with this in mind.... As a result, he did not get scores for it, and the same task is left for him

to read and write again... Another student replied. She told everything, and replied for all questions. In some places she deepened the theme, added something. That is why. I gave her good grade.

From this classroom example, it could be noted that Law teacher gave a chance for those student who did not meet her requirements to revise the task, and redo it again. In addition, it should be noted that one of her criteria in order to get a good grade is to have replies for all seminar questions.

Arabic history teacher also shared with the classroom assessment example, and according to her words, she was completely dissatisfied by class preparedness. She told that no students would get all 100 scores, and only one of them got the highest score 90 and just because she expressed her willingness to reply first. She was not satisfied because students did not meet her requirements for making notes. She claimed:

Not all students were ready for class, two of them explained that their work had been saved in the phone, and they would go and print it. She claimed that not all the written work meet the requirements, which I always remind. You have seminar plan. There are four questions. You have all questions written together, and you need to find out where the answer for one question and another, or you answer only for separate questions. However, I explained them once again that you should have all the replies for seminar questions...

For Arabic history also it is important to have all replies for seminar questions. For those students who did not do it, she gave a chance to redo it, and reply it on individual classes.

Finance teacher shared with classroom assessment example during she evaluated students' presentations. According to her, during the class, one of students got the highest score because her work was interesting and thoroughly examined. Another student got the

minimum score of 80 because she did not find her work as an analytical work. It was just informative report, and she used outdated materials of 2012 year. However, this student did not agree with her score and explained that she also worked on it. This means that sometimes students may have disagreements due to the fact there is no strict criteria for assessing presentations.

Another classroom assessment example is from classroom of Russian language teacher. She described assessment example from the seminar sessions. On seminar classes, students should prepare answers for the given questions, and then each student should perform answers orally in class. Russian language teacher claimed, “Each student gets a grade depending on the quality of work, and on if the student covered all the aspects of the seminar questions.” In this way, preparing for seminar classes have the aim “to work individually with literature from books, internet and journals, and choose the interesting and important one...He must read several sources, and then something will remain in his head.” This means that assessment tasks focuses on the ability to work with literature, and to work individually.

American history teacher described example of her classroom assessment in the following way:

Recently I have conducted session in the group 306. They had to prepare presentations...Majority of students coped with this task. How do I evaluate them? For sure, I tell them their mistakes in order to foster them to develop. Assessment is not some control or punishment system.... During these four years, we have to prepare good professionals. That is, we must always pay attention to their shortcomings. For example, I had a remark on a student. She prepared a wonderful presentation. She had a lovely material. She presented the diplomatic documents. Presentation had a rich content. However, the text she was telling repeated the

words from presentation. There was no freedom and beauty of reporting. Therefore, I made a comment that presentations should be loud and emotional in order to catch the attention of audience. Thus, I made some remark for student in order that he would take it into account and the next time I'll punish her stricter for mistakes.

From this example, it is clear that her students learn from mistakes, and teachers' feedback helps to develop students' presentation skills. However, if American history shares some descriptors for the task as rubrics for presentations beforehand, students will try to achieve those written requirements, and her feedback will be focused on improving students' ability to present material rather than for explaining her requirements. The role of feedback in student learning is thoroughly examined below.

All five teachers indicated the important role of feedback. Most of them give feedback orally, and discuss it in a group. Teachers view feedback as a way to improve the students' work. Thus, Law teacher stated,

For example, I give them the task to make a comparative table. And when students come to submit their work, I give them my comments such as here is right, here something is missing, here you need the detailed information. Then they have a chance to improve their work. If they I have a big mistake, I will not accept their work.

This means that owing to teacher's feedback students always improve their work. However, the only thing is that she has many students, and it takes a lot of time to explain each of them. This issue refers to almost all teachers because most of them give oral feedbacks. Written feedback is widely used by Russian language teacher because she has to check the grammar of assignment. Arabic history teacher argued that she always gives feedback to students, because she always is not satisfied with their work, "I am always is not satisfied with their replies. Even if we had a kind of discussion of material, but we did

not disclose any question. And then I start to explain once again...” From her words, it becomes clear that she has difficulties in explaining her requirement. This will be much easier for her if she knows that she can develop rubrics for each her assignment, and then she will not spend a plenty of her time explaining the same requirements.

American history teacher views that owing to feedback, she can see how students grow, and how the quality of their work increases. She commented, “It is my pleasure to understand that you help students to grow.” However, she also indicated that it takes time that students will fully meet your requirements using your feedback, “only to the end of the semester they fully meet requirements”, and questioned herself, “maybe there is a lack of clarity.” In this way, teachers view feedback as a way to meet their requirements, and what is more, they spend a plenty of time explaining their requirements, rather than giving feedback for further improvement of students’ works.

Another type of feedback is students’ feedback given for themselves. In this regard, Russian language told that sometimes when students do not agree with her/his grades I ask them to evaluate themselves, and tell them “what score will you assign this kind of work?” In this regard, students realize their weaknesses, and replies honestly what grades she/he deserve. However, Russian language uses this kind of assessment informally, and very seldom. This is a case of other teachers as well. Thus, Law teacher claimed how can they assess themselves, and if they do assess, this will subjective assessment. Furthermore, American history teacher reported that she used peer-assessment approach in the class but for the purpose to teach students how to assess as her students were future teachers. All interviewed teachers argued for the subjectivity and unreliability of self-assessment and peer-assessment. Thus, in order to avoid subjectivity of teachers and students, a clear criterion should be stated.

Teachers mostly tell about their requirements in the introductory class, and continue to explain requirements during the whole study semester. In this sense, Arabic history teacher claimed that she tells her requirements on the first session, and always comes back and explain it again. This is because teachers do not have strict and stated criteria for assessment activities. Thus, American history teacher argued that her students fully meet my requirements only at the end of the academic year, and the reason for this, as she thinks, is not having strict criteria, “very often, you meet with the fact that students accustomed to your requirements almost on the midterm weeks. Then gradually begin to perform, and I fully satisfied with their work only in the end of the academic year.”

All five teachers do have criteria for assessment, but all criteria of teachers are vague and not clearly stated. Thus, Law teacher indicated, “There is no detailed assessment criterion in teachers’ syllabus.”

What Law teacher told about criteria can be referred to other teachers also. Thus, no one of them do not have “detailed assessment criteria” for any assignments. When I ask about if they have criteria for assessment, some of them said that they do not have the written criteria, and others told that the criterion is written in the syllabus. However, the criteria they have in the syllabuses are more about their assessment policy. For example, how students could accumulate scores.

Although teachers do have their criteria in mind when they assess students’ work. As teachers have to assess each type of classes (lectures, seminars, and individual work of student with teacher), there are different assessment criteria. Thus, almost all teachers, except Arabic history, indicated that they give 100 scores for those students who attend and participate in lectures. For Arabic history teacher, attendance in lecture is enough for assess only their attendance.



As the most applied assignments on seminars is the oral and written replies to seminar questions, teachers described their criteria for assessing this type of the assignment. All teachers indicated that students should know and understand the material. Thus, they claimed that the main indicator of their understanding and knowledge is when students answer without using their conspectus, or reading it. If a student replies, it in this way, he gets the excellent score. Law teacher commented, “I always tell them, try to reply without your copybooks. They know if they come to reply with a copybook, I will give such scores.” In addition, posing questions helps her to know whether the student understands the theme or not. This could refer to other teachers too. Their requirements or criteria are based on how well a student knows and understands the material. However, Arabic history teacher claimed she gives the highest 100 score for those students who evaluates the material, uses the different sources, and present it effectively. Although in the same time, she also gives the highest scores for those students who retell the material well. From this, it could be noted that they evaluate students’ ability to know, understand and retell material.

More importantly, not having the stated requirements or criteria leads to a comparison of the students’ work. Thus, Law teacher observed that there is an atmosphere of competitiveness among students. Everyone strives to reply, and based on their replies teachers assess students. In this sense, Arabic history teacher claimed that it is difficult to explain students why I assigned one student this grade, for another student another grade. This is due to “subjective assessment. There are no a clear criteria for assessment which will allow to avoid the subjectivity.” This means that teachers compare works of students, and for those students who know better they assign the highest scores. As a result, these leads, Arabic teacher argued, to “grading according to the average of students’ work, not

based on your ideal requirements.” For example, there are groups, which work well, and you assess considering the average level of students’ performance.

From the discussion above, it has become clear that the teachers feel that something is wrong with their criteria. This is because most of them stated that they sometimes feel subjective when they evaluate students. However, they simply do not know that they can avoid this subjectivity by introducing clearly stated criteria for each assignment. This is was about teachers’ daily or classroom assessment practices, next I am going to discuss about their summative, or AoL practices.

There are two main important assessment activities, which has concluding remarks for students’ grades. One of them is a midterm examination or teachers refer to it as “*rubezhniykontrol*”. From Russian language, it means midterm control. It takes place in the middle of semester, in approximately seven weeks after the beginning of semester. Each teacher has different midterm examination task. For example, Law teacher conducts it orally, and she claimed, “On the ‘*rubezhniykontrol*’ I may ask anything from the seminar questions, I can ask seminar, lecture, or individual work of student teacher classes. She also emphasized that ‘*rubezhniykontrol*’” is my mini examination, because she can identify if students knows and understands the material by asking them questions. American history teacher indicated that midterm examination is students’ opportunity to increase scores, and she has different tasks for midterm examination such as presentations, writing reports or playing games. As for Russian language teacher, she gives control or individual works for midterm examination. Arabic history teacher assigns initiative task on midterm examination. She explained:

Now I give only initiative tasks. If you do it, you will get the full 100 score. This is because, in the case if assess students’ tasks then the best work will get 100 score.

Thus, if some of my students perform a good job, students start to dispute just

because someone showed a good work, and then they have to do it. As a result, I always lower my requirements.

Arabic history told that she gives initiative tasks such as writing poems, or designing test question. In addition, this means that as midterm examination is initiative task only those students who have the lower grades do this task, because they need to increase their scores.

Thus, Finance Teacher argues that midterm examination is not an effective assessment method. This is because many teachers give an average score on midterm examinations, “If student studied through the semester he gets his average score on midterm. May be it is right because otherwise students who did not study can just come and reply on the midterm, and get his points.” This shows that Finance, and all teachers due to the unique university assessment policy do not have separate percentage for midterm examination. In this university, midterm examination is mostly the opportunity for students to increase their scores. Midterm examinations control what students have done, and what amount of knowledge they gained.

Another form of summative assessment is the final examination. The weight of the final examination is 40 percent of students’ final grade. In this university, final examination is taken place in the form of multiple-choice test with 40 questions. Only Russian language teacher told that they have also the oral examination because they study language, and they need to assess students’ speaking skills.

Interestingly, answers for this 40 question multiple-choice test are provided by teachers. This is not teachers’ decision. This is a decision of administrative staff. In this sense, one of teachers explained,

Now we are obliged to give tests with the correct answers. Although at the beginning of implementing the credit system, it was not so. At the beginning we

should not give test questions. Then we should give them with wrong answers.

Now we are obliged to give tests indicating the correct answers. As a result, it increases the performance of the university's academic achievement. This all affects the quality of students' knowledge. And yet ... we go to the deterioration.

This means that university made it easy for students to pass the final examination in order to have good ratings according to the academic performance of students.

However, almost all of teachers claimed the final examinations lower the quality of knowledge. Teachers indicated the not effectiveness of the final examination. Students prepare for the final examination just memorizing all questions and answers. Thus, Law teacher told that only midterm examinations shows knowledge of students, during which I can ask additional questions and to find out whether student knows and understand the themes. However, she argued that the final examinations are only about memorization and almost all students show good results.

Therefore, Finance teacher told that she would prefer to refuse from the current tests, and to use the oral examinations instead of it. In the same time, she suggested that it would be better to have both oral examinations, and tests, but test questions should be well developed. She explained that we should have tests for the final examinations but tests questions should be different, and oriented on thinking rather than memorizing, and university should allow not to give test questions, or at least the right answers.

In this sense, Arabic history teacher argued that she would not refuse from tests because she one of the first teachers who started to use it. Instead, she commented “only way to improve tests’ quality so that “tests should be not only for checking the amount of information as when and where, but to have such tests, which will require thinking like reasoning and logic skills.”

From the discussion above, it could be noted teacher' assessment tasks are mainly focused on students' speaking skills, retelling the content of material, and as a result on memorization. Thus, they believe that examinations should be in a verbal format. This might because, as Arabic history teacher explained, graduates of higher education institutions are intelligentsia, and intelligentsia should be able to speak well, and share their opinions. However, one of teachers claimed that there is a need for new assessment methods, which will allow to evaluate students' ability to work individually, and their ability to examine critically the literature but in the same time she does not believe that new assessment methods will be introduced in the university. This might because teachers in this university were faced with many challenges, which are described in the next subsection.

### **Assessment Challenges**

In this section, I will describe teachers' challenges and difficulties from their assessment experience. When these teachers assess students, they face the challenges such as insufficient time for evaluation, students' workload, students' passiveness, large classes, teachers' subjectivity, and feeling the pressure from school.

The first and the biggest challenge of teachers is the insufficient time for assessment. In this sense, Law teacher argued, "50 minutes is not sufficient, and therefore they come and reply in other time. Sometimes we stay until evening. Thus for me the biggest issue is time." Arabic history teacher has the same challenges, and argued that it is too little time for classes.

Another challenge is students' workload. They have many classes in one semester and a lot of tasks to do. Therefore, this influences on the quality of their performance. On this point, Arabic history teacher commented that the quality of students' work decreases due to a large amount of task, and "therefore they do not care about quality, they do care

about the quantity of replied seminars. But if they prepare, as I want they will prepare only for my class. However, they have many other courses to study.”

Not only students do have a lot of works, teachers also are busy with the additional works. Therefore, Law teacher claimed that it is difficult to control the students’ deepest knowledge. Majority of teachers indicated that they are overwhelmed by other additional work except teaching. This is social life of students, administrative work regarding to students’ documentations, and write for publications. Therefore, teachers cannot to evaluate properly each work of student.

Teachers stated about one more challenge which is large classes. Law teacher told said that “there are 30 students in one groups, and some classes we conduct together. Do you imagine I need also to conduct tutorials, and to assign scores. How it could be? ” This is identical for other teachers as well. Therefore the do not have sufficient time for listening each students’ seminar reply, and they do it on SRSP times.

All five teachers indicated the challenge to be objective when they assess students. For example, Law teacher told that it is difficult for her to give bad marks for those students who knows and understands well, or to assign good scores for those students who always tries to do assignments well but do not understand the material well. In addition, American history teacher stated that she feels subjective herself when student start to argue and disagree with scores, and explained that this might because of absence of the strict criteria.

Another important challenge is the pressure from the school. Teachers feel pressure from administrative staff, to assign a passing score for the final examination even those students who did not come to classes, or did not submitted their works. Arabic history teacher explained,

We submit students' grades on the 8<sup>th</sup> week to administration. Administration should sign it, but they will not sign if I did not give the passing scores for some students... And in order not to be stressful, I assign the passing 54 scores."

She continued that university is interested in having good performance of students.

She claimed, "The indicators of the university and teachers' as well are the quantity of the excellent marks, not the quality. And in the current system of education, everyone gets the highest scores on tests." Therefore, Arabic history told about her biggest challenge is to compromise on assigning grades with yourself. She reported that she assesses now "for students' willingness to work individually, and for systematic work, not for the level of knowledge, and competency. This is 60%, and 40% of their grades is for memorizing the final examination test questions and the right answers.

These discussed challenges are identical for all five teachers. The named above challenges affects negatively to their assessment practices. However, several of them such as subjectivity, pressure from school, and students' quality of work could be resolved if new assessment approaches will be introduced for them.

### **Summary of Findings**

In the previous sections, I presented analyzed data regarding to research question. In this section, I will present the summary of the findings of the study. Based in my data analysis above, I have interpreted the following findings:

1. New educational system introduced in this university, according to teachers and university documents, seems to focus on students' ability to study individually.
2. The teachers have learned assessment mostly through apprenticeship of observation, i.e. by observing their teachers assessment practices.
3. The teachers need to be further guidance about assessment practices because they did not have any professional development on it.

4. Despite the requirements of current education reforms, i.e. teachers need to promote and develop their students' analytical and critical thinking skills, unfortunately, the teachers continue to teach and assess according to the old system, to teach content, facts and memorization.
5. Teachers indicated that one of the purposes of assessment improves teaching.
6. The teachers seemed to have some understanding of criterion based assessment, however, they do not use proper criteria in their lessons, moreover, they teach and assess knowledge and understanding of their students, and do not focus on higher order thinking skills
7. The teachers' norm-based assessment strategies keep promoting competition amongst their students
8. As teachers do not have a clear criterion for their tasks, their feedback on students' learning is not effective. Moreover, teachers' claim that due to large classes and limited time they are not able to give feedback for each student's work.
9. Teachers believe that learning style was changed in order to make students accountable for their study, and there is much emphasis on students' ability to work individually. However, they have a vague understanding that self-assessment and peer-assessment role in achieving this aim is crucial.
10. Teachers believe that assessment should control students learning and their teaching as well.
11. Some of teachers are not satisfied with their assessment methods, and assessment strategy of the university due to challenges they faced.
12. Teachers mostly are not satisfied with assessment on the final examination. Many of them stated that there is a need to change it.



## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter was to present findings of the study. The chapter began with describing teachers' past assessment beliefs and practices, and then it was followed by present assessment beliefs and practices. Next, I described assessment challenges teachers faced. In the end, I presented the major findings. These findings will be further discussed in a greater depth in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion of Findings**

### **Introduction**

The previous chapter presented the findings of the study. The purpose of this chapter is to present a discussion of major findings. Analyzed findings aimed to answer for the overarching research question of the study, which is how do teachers understand and experience assessment approaches at a university in Oral town of Kazakhstan. Discussion of findings revealed in the chapter above is done drawing on examination of literature on teachers' assessment beliefs' and practices.

### **Discussion of findings**

This section discusses main findings by using ideas and concepts from literature. My findings suggest that current educational system seems to focus on students' ability to study individually. As part of the Bologna process, higher education institutions of Kazakhstan have introduced changes to their curriculum and teaching-learning processes, including assessment policies and practices. One of the major shifts was the adopting of credit hour system, in which students' learning and their responsibility for their learning was emphasized. Thus, these changes were related the changes in teaching hours, teaching methods, nature and types of sessions, and evaluation methods. Regarding the latter, there was a shift from 5-point scale to 100-point scale assessment. It was stated by teachers that they attended workshops on these changes. However, regarding to evaluation methods workshops, it seems that they were taught for grading, not new assessment approaches, which will enhance students' learning. It should be noted that enhancing students learning was the rational for changes in educational system.

The next finding indicated that teachers have learned assessment mostly observing their teachers which is consistent with Pajares's (1992) concept of apprenticeship of observation. This means that they learnt to assess students by observing their teachers'

assessment practices. The study showed that the assessment beliefs and practices of the university instructors in Oral town of Kazakhstan have been mainly influenced by the legacy of the Soviet education system and are further shaped by the post-Soviet changes and reforms in higher education. In this sense, it should be noted that teachers' assessment beliefs and practices differ from one society to another depending on the societal and cultural factors (Brown & Michaelides, 2011). Thus, the study found that the teachers are trying to adopt new assessment beliefs and practices, but at the same time, they also retain most assessment beliefs and practices that they used to have from the Soviet times.

The study also identified that these university instructors did not learn specifically about assessment from their pre-service teacher education, neither they attended in-service professional development courses focusing on assessment. It was thus clear that they mostly learned how to assess through trial and error and through "apprenticeship of observation" (Pajares, 1992). As a result, these instructors seem not to have very strong assessment beliefs and practices (Brown, 2009; Stiggins, 1998). For example, they haven't heard about formative and summative assessment or criterion-based assessment, and they have not been using them systematically. Therefore, I think that there is a need for professional development of teachers.

The teachers need to be further guidance about assessment practices because they did not have any professional development on it. The teachers are trying to learn and use new assessment approaches and methods according to current education reforms but it is difficult to change their assessment methods without having pre-service or in-service trainings on assessment approaches. Interestingly, all teachers indicated that they did not have any specific courses on the assessment methods during the pre-service and in-service studying. This could be the reason for poor assessment literacy (Brown, 2009; Stiggins, 1998). In this way, all teachers responded to the question what is formative and summative

assessment that they did not know about them and they asked me back to explain them. Even if they are using these assessment methods, they do not realize what kind of assessment they are using. Thus, it should be noted that they still use combination of old and new assessment practices. Thus, new educational system aims to develop critical thinking and creativity skills but their assessment methods evaluate students' lower order thinking skills.

Despite the requirements of current education reforms, i.e. teachers need to promote and develop their students' analytical and critical thinking skills, unfortunately, the teachers continue to teach and assess according to the old system, to teach content, facts and memorization.

Assessment of students' learning levels was carefully examined by Bloom (Krathwohl, 2002). He designed taxonomy according to which teachers could evaluate students learning. According to Bloom's taxonomy (as cite in Krathwohl, 2002) teachers mainly focus on knowledge and comprehension, which are the lowest categories of taxonomy, also called lower-order thinking categories. Higher level categories of taxonomy are application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

It is difficult to say that the teachers measure students 'higher order thinking skills. For example, teachers told that the main criteria for their mainly used assessment task – oral seminar replies is that if students retell material written in their copybooks and answered to questions, then they get the highest points. However if they just read a written material from a copybook than they get the lower points. They get the lowest points when they just show or submit copybook with a written seminar. This means that teachers measure only the content knowledge rather than the higher order thinking skills.

The interviewed teachers seemed to work only with knowledge and comprehension category. Only Arabic history teachers told about the need for developing application,

analysis, synthesis, and evaluation skills through giving students productive tasks.

Productive tasks, which requires skills to compare, analyze and evaluate materials, or literature. However, she argued, “I cannot give such kind of tasks for students due to limited time and large amount of students in class.” In addition, Russian language teacher mentioned that she requires students not only to know and understand the material but also to apply it. Certainly it is important to her evaluate students’ skill to apply when they speak the knowledge of grammar because she teaches language.

In this regard, Brown and Michaelides (2011) claimed assessing higher-order thinking skills is one of the conditions when assessment improves learning. It should be noted that Brown (2009) divided teachers’ beliefs about assessment goals in to different purposes, and one of them, the purpose of assessment to improve learning and teaching. Whether participants of the study in the improvement purpose of assessment is discussed below.

This finding of this section claims that teachers believe that one of the aims of assessment is to improve teaching. However, according to Brown (2009), one of the teachers’ believe about the goals of assessment is the assessment for improvement. Assessment for improvement not only teaching but learning as well. Improvement goal of assessment was stated by Black and William (1998) as a formative assessment, or assessment for learning. Formative assessment was introduced to help improve students’ learning.

The university instructors of this study note that assessing also demonstrates the quality of their own teaching. They suppose that if students perform badly, or did not understanding the theme, it means that something is wrong with their teaching, and something is missing there. These instructors indicated that assessment helps them improve their teaching. In such a way, teachers make decisions about students’ learning

and their teaching based on their view that if one or more students cannot explain the material, it means that something wrong with their teaching. However, in formative assessment, there is a need for clear criteria, according to which teachers can judge the effectiveness of their teaching methods, and can give feedback for students, which is aimed to improve their learning (Black & William, 1998).

Nevertheless, teachers have a vague understanding of criteria. The teachers seemed to have understanding of criterion based assessment; however, they do not use proper criteria in their classes. Thus, law teacher indicated,

There is a table of assessment of knowledge. It says that the student must actively participate in the classroom. Then, plus attendance. It's all written. Just, you know what is missing. This is probably should be individualized. For example, how students reply on seminars, I evaluate in my own way, how I think it is necessary to grade... Syllabuses do not have detailed assessment criteria.

Moreover, they teach and assess knowledge and understanding of their students, and do not focus on higher order thinking skills. As was discussed above, teachers have very simple criteria for their tasks such as retelling the material without using notes. Thus, many teachers claim that most of their students do not meet their 'ideal' requirements. However, how students could meet their requirements, if teachers do not share with their detailed requirements for each task. In this regard, Black and William (1998) highlight the importance of setting criteria, or standard for the formative assessment. They argue no setting criteria, or standard will lead to assessment based on the cohort depending context.

Not having a clear criteria for assessment tasks leads to comparison students' work based on the "a relative standard" (Glaser, 1963, p. 6). This is what actually happens in this university. Teachers use norm-referenced assessment, and this norm-based assessment strategies keep promoting competition amongst their students. Arabic history teacher

referred also to the issue of the norm referencing, “the quality of student works lowers and lowers. That is why I have to assess considering the mean performance in class. Not based on my ideal requirements but on something cohort median.” She continued, “We have groups where all students perform, and groups student of which performs bad results.” Therefore, I should assess students according to the norm standard of the group. This means that teachers compare students’ works, and this in turn creates the sense of competitiveness.

These university instructors use predominately norm-referenced assessment because they themselves experienced and observed in their school and university years. The recent review for Kazakhstani secondary education of OECD (2014) made it clear that teachers’ replicate previous assessment methods:

Teachers’ judgments are based on comparing each student’s achievements with those of other students in the same class. This “norm-referenced” approach to classroom assessment has many disadvantages. There are no differentiated criteria by which to assess and compare learning outcomes in various subjects, which can be explained to students and their parents. Teachers tend to award grades by benchmarking against the median, highest and lowest level of student knowledge in their class; there can be no assurance that two students given the same mark by different teachers in different schools are performing at the same level (p. 117).

Furthermore, university instructor of Arabic History indicated that they use assessment subjectively. An instructor of American History agreed and added that due to subjective assessment, their students often disagree and argue about the grades. She feels that students argue because of absence of the clear criteria for why they get a particular grade. Criterion-referenced assessment could address this issue. OECD (2014) report suggests it in the following way:

Criteria-based assessment is fairer to students than the traditional method applied in Kazakhstan. It compares students' achievements to objective standards based on real learning goals stated in advance, rather than to subjective standards based on how well fellow students do. It reflects on the quality of particular work rather than the student's general ability, enabling teachers to justify their marks, whether good or bad, more easily. It can be used to measure progress along a trajectory from each student's individual starting point. It can increase student motivation for developing skills to achieve the expected outcomes (p. 118).

This means that teachers' cannot give an effective feedback for students to achieve expected goals, or their requirements because simply they do not state, and share with students their requirements. However, feedback is crucial in improving students' learning.

Feedback is the engine for formative assessment. In this regard, Black and William (as cited in Dann, 2014) argued, "Feedback is as fundamental in the learning process as having a teacher" (p. 151). These teachers also view that feedback is important in a learning process. However, as teachers do not have a clear criterion for their tasks, their feedback on students' learning is not effective. Arabic and American teachers claimed that students meet their requirement only in the end of semester. This is because they do not indicate their requirements clearly. It can be noted that if teachers set their detailed requirements beforehand, teachers' feedback will be more effective, and as a result, students' work as well. Thus, Black and William (1998) and Sadler (1998) claim that it is crucial to define criteria in order to give the useful feedback.

Moreover, teachers claim that due to large classes and limited time they are not able to give feedback for each student's work. On their teaching practice, they have difficulties in giving feedback, and using feedback by students. As they mainly give verbal



feedback, and as a Law instructor commented, “it takes too much time to give feedback for all students”. Other instructors also added that they do not provide feedback systematically.

The feedback also motivates students to study (Dweck, 2006). A History instructor observed, “Students are different. Some of them perform well, while others need to put a big effort to perform well. Therefore, I stimulate those students who may struggle to study by giving them feedback such as: you made a good job keep on doing it.” However, some authors such as Black and William (1998) criticize this kind of feedback because it leads to increasing self-esteem of students. Instead, students should be motivated to learn in order to meet requirements of teacher. More importantly, they should know and understand their own progress.

In this case, self-assessment and peer-assessment is a great tool for keep students aware about their learning. The literature from the international context revealed the benefits of the self-assessment and peer-assessment, as important part of helping students’ realize about their role in their learning and helping them participate in their learning more actively (Black & William, 1998). Self-assessment and peer-assessment helps students to know about their own progress and what else they need to do to reach desired goals of course (Dann, 2014). More importantly, self-assessment and peer-assessment helps students to be a self-directed learner (Hanrahan & Isaacs, 2001). In a sense, self-directed learner is about life-long learning (Tan, 2007), and it is know that life-long learning is one of agendas of the Bologna Process.

However, the study showed that the university teachers do not use self-assessment and peer-assessment in their practices. Despite the fact that teachers believe that learning style was changed in order to make students accountable for their study, and there is much emphasis on students’ ability to work individually, they have a vague understanding that

role of self-assessment and peer-assessment in achieving this aim is crucial. In addition, reviewed methodological guide for university teachers have many articles on how to make students to be a self-regulated learner with much emphasis on students' individual work. Nevertheless, there is no article or guide for teachers on self-assessment and peer-assessment.

From this discussion above, it is clear teachers believe that assessment reflects on effectiveness of their teaching, and based on this they can make important decisions about their teaching methods. However, it is difficult to make decisions not having a clearly stated criterion for assessment tasks. Moreover, they do not believe assessment approaches they used could improve students' learning.

Instead, they think that assessment is under the interest of students, and this improves their learning. This is consistent with what Brown (2009) identified teachers' belief or conception of assessment for student accountability. According to him, assessment for student accountability certifies students' learning and holds them accountable for their study (Brown 2010). Thus, university instructors believe that in the credit transfer system, students started to study more consistently and systematically. This is because of students' willingness to get high scores and get access for the final examination. In the previous section, it was described that 40% of students' grades is their final examination. In order to get these scores, they firstly need to gain sufficient points in order to get access for the final examination. Therefore, teachers perceive assessment is mostly students' interest. Moreover, there is an incentive that motivates students to study and perform well because of university discount policy for students with a good performance. In this sense, teachers' belief that assessment is used to control students' learning, particularly their obtained knowledge.

Furthermore, it was found that some of teachers believe that assessment controls their teaching. This is consistent with another goal of assessment, stated by Brown (2009), is to make school and teacher accountable. According to him, teachers belief, “judging the quality of schooling depends in part on accurate assessments of student performance” (Brown & Michaelides, 2011, p. 12). In this regard, Arabic history claimed that teachers are pressed to provide the minimum points even for those students who did not work and did not come to classes in order to give them access for the final examination. She argued, “the indicators of the university, and ours also is the quantity of the excellent marks, not the quality. And in the current system of education, everyone gets the highest scores on tests.” In this sense, it could be noted that this teacher is not satisfied with assessment strategy of university.

As I mentioned above, I found that some of teachers are not satisfied with their assessment methods, and assessment strategy of the university due to challenges they faced. The study showed that some of the university teachers also had the same issues with their assessment on way or another. For instance, Arabic history teacher is completely not satisfied with her assessment practices and she told about her biggest challenge is to compromise on assigning grades. She reported that she assesses now “for students’ willingness to work individually, and for systematic work, not for the level of knowledge, and competency. This is 60%, and 40% of their grades is for memorizing the final examination test questions and the right answers.”

Obliging to give the right answers for the final examination test is the concern of most of teachers. They believe that the final examination is not effective and it measures only students’ ability to remember. In this sense, Brown (2009) argues that assessment could have no purpose. Thus, Harlen (1999) refers to assessment with no-purpose when assessment affects teachers’ professionalism and autonomy negatively. This is true in the

case of Arabic history teacher who has much concern on effectiveness of the final examination.

Thus, I have found that teachers mostly are not satisfied with assessment on the final examination. Many of them stated that there is a need to change it. For instance, Finance teacher argued that the examination questions are normally poorly designed. Instead, many teachers prefer oral examinations instead of tests. Some of them think that it would be to have the combination of test and the oral examination for the final. According to Paulsen (as cited in Kehm, 2001) combination of oral and written examinations is also the best method for the final examination (p. 27).

What can be noticed from the discussion above is the willingness of teachers to use the oral examinations. From their point of view, it is effective method of knowing if student understand the course or not. Moreover, even if takes a lot of time to listen to each student's reply on seminar class, they are not going to change this kind of assessment activity. This is again from their experience being a student at school, and in university. Similarly, universities in the East Germany, which were under pressure of the Soviet Union, prefers oral examinations instead of written (Kehm, 2001). Barbara Kehm (2001) highlighted that the good side of the oral examinations is the chance for examinees to present their abilities, knowledge, and for examiners to "distinguish superficial from real knowledge through in-depth questioning" (p. 27). This is about what Law teacher claimed about conducting midterm examinations. She told that owing to asking questions she knows whether student understand the themes or not. The only disadvantage of the oral examinations is its subjectivity. Many authors criticize its low level of objectivity, reliability, and validity (Kehm, 2001).

However, Arabic history teacher has no wish to refuse from tests. She prefers having tests but not giving answers to students and having more questions, which will

require thinking rather than memorizing. Thus, it could be noted that one way or another teachers are willing to change their final examination methods.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter was to discuss findings based on reviewed literature. As we above I discussed the findings reveled from the previous chapter was thoroughly discussed and examined. This discussion will be followed up in the next chapter, one of the aims of which is answer for the overarching research question of the study.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion and Implication**

In the previous chapter, I examined my findings using relevant literature. This chapter addresses to conclusion of the study by answering to the research question, which is how do teachers understand and practice assessment approaches in university in Oral. Further I describe some implications of my study and areas for further research. Finally, I present limitations of the study.

### **Answering to the Research Question**

This section aims to answer for the overarching research question of the study. The overarching research question of the study is how do teachers understand and practice assessment approaches in university in Oral. Comparing theoretical knowledge about assessment approaches with perception and practical experience of university teachers in one university in helped me to answer for my central research question.

Participants of the study view assessment differently. It is difficult to say that the teachers view assessment in the same way. However, it should be noted that their beliefs are mostly influenced by their previous teachers' assessment experience used in the Soviet time.

Most of them belief that assessment should improve teaching. Nevertheless, on practice, their ways of identifying of what it should be done to improve their teaching remains weak. This is because as of absence of criteria for their assessment tasks, and therefore it is difficult to identify what exactly the problem a problem in their teaching, and as a result how to fix it. Therefore, it could be noted that teachers view assessment as controlling of teaching rather than improving it.

Furthermore, most of teachers believe assessment should control students' learning. They view that in the current educational system students became more accountable for their study. This is connected with achieving the highest scores for the sake of future career. Thus, teachers view that assessment task is hold to give them marks and to certify their learning. Moreover teachers connect it with student ability to study individually, or in other words with self-directed learning. Only one teacher perceives that assessment should increase students' willingness to learn not for the sake of grades, but to increase their interest to learn by questioning. However, her assessment practice differs from her beliefs. To put it in other way, she evaluates students' learning against her beliefs. That is why, she is extremely not satisfied with her assessment practice, and more with university's assessment strategy.

Many of teachers feel pressure from university when they assess students. Firstly, they feel pressure because they are not allowed to put the lowest grades for those students with the work of which teachers are not satisfied. Secondly, many of them are against university assessment strategy for the final examination. Thus, teachers are obliged to provide answers for the final multiple choice tests. As one teacher indicated, this is because university is interested in having good performance. University is interested more in the quantity of good grades rather than its quality.

As a final point, it should be noted that teachers view assessment for summative purposes rather than for formative purposes. This is because of feedback. Teachers view feedback as important but time consuming and hard to make it in large classes as most of their assessment tasks are in verbal form. Therefore, on practice teachers did not give feedback for students constantly. Moreover, their feedback has a less effectiveness because of lack of clear criteria for assessment tasks. Therefore, their feedback is mostly focused on explaining students their requirements for the task.

### **Achieving the Purpose of the Study**

In the previous section I answered to central research question of the study. This section covers achieving the purpose of the study. Thus, it addresses to exploring teachers' assessment believes and practices in one university in Oral.

The issue that motivated me to conduct this research was my assessment experience being a student in a state regional university, and in Nazarbayev University. This experience helped to compare assessment methods of universities, and questioned me about teachers' assessment approaches used by teachers from regional university. From my observation, teachers in the regional university have a vague understanding of the purpose of assessment. In order to explore this problem, I narrowed my focus and described the purpose for this research project as follows: to explore teachers' beliefs and practices of assessment in one university in Oral. Answering to the research question stated in the previous section allowed me to achieve this purpose. Thus, by answering to the research question I explored teachers' perception of assessment.

### **Implication of the study**

Drawing on the examined literature, findings and discussion of the study, the study can bring the following implications for teachers, educational leaders of university, and for policy makers.

First of all, teachers need to learn new approaches of assessment. However, learning assessment approaches is not enough they should able to use new assessment approaches on practice. For example, to learn how to design assessment criteria for their tasks, and try to use in their classes.

Furthermore, teachers should be able to connect their goals of subject with assessment tasks. This is important because goals of subject could be achieved by



assigning tasks for students. Thus, task should serve for achieving goals of study course. Moreover, it will facilitate students to understand the importance of the task, and will raise interests to do assignments for the sake of their future career.

Additionally, teachers should understand the importance of formative assessment in the current educational system. Reviewed literature showed that formative assessment is the effective instrument to improve students' learning, and self-directed learner's skills which is the aim of the current educational system.

From this study, it became clear that assessment role in improving education is crucial. There is a need for introducing new methods of assessment which will improve learning and teaching. Thus, for educational leaders it is important to understand the significance of assessment in improving the quality of teaching and learning. It is not enough to implement only assessment strategy as it was done in this university. Moreover, educational leaders should give more flexibility for teachers to design their own assessment methods. For example, to give them flexibility to design their final examination task.

Another recommendation for educational leaders refers to educational leaders of Nazarbayev University. This is because one of the missions of Nazarbayev University is to translate their experience to the other universities of Kazakhstan. In the frame of this translation policy, translation of assessment approaches could be done. Moreover, this translation should not finish with several workshops, but followed up with further support. For example, it could educational board of assessment where teachers share their assessment experience, challenges, and assessment literature.

Implication for policymakers is before introducing reforms taken from the Bologna countries, they should take into consideration of how this policy will work at home. Thus, it is important to view perceptions of those stakeholders who actually implement

introduced reforms. In the case of this university, it became clear that teachers is implementing these reforms with old, or soviet type of thinking regarding to the purposes of assessment. As a result, assessment approaches of teachers does not serve the needs of the current higher education system such as student-centered learning, and a call for self-directed learning.

As it was mentioned before the named above implications were drawn on findings and discussion of the study. However, this research should be researched further in order to make more strong recommendations.

### **Directions for Further Research**

This section also addresses for giving implications but for further research. Large-scale research should be done in order to reveal whole teachers' perception of assessment within higher education teachers. Thus, quantitative study applicable for this purpose of the study. This is important because it will allow to give more strong recommendations for teachers and policymakers.

In addition, experimental design research could be done in universities. Thus, researcher can divide teachers in two groups: control and experimental. For experimental group researcher will conduct workshops and trainings on assessment. Experimental design research will be helpful on the one hand for improving teachers' assessment literacy, on the other hand it is helpful for comparing teachers' assessment believes and practice of teachers who will participate in assessment workshop, and who will not.

Furthermore, a qualitative study could be held considering views not only teachers, but students as well. Students' perceptions of assessment have not been researched yet.

As a final point, I would claim that any research on assessment in Kazakhstani higher education has a great importance. This is due to the fact that assessment in higher education was less researched in Kazakhstan. One of them is this study which will be

helpful for viewing any other directions for further research. However, it should be noted that as any research it has its own limitations of the study. Limitations of the study will be presented as follows.

### **Limitations of the study**

This section aims to present limitations of the study. While conducting this research I faced with several limitations.

The first limitation of the study is that it is a case study. Therefore, important findings revealed from interviews and document analysis could not be generalized. This is a case of assessment experience and belief of only five university teachers in Oral. However, I personally think that similar findings will be revealed from other Kazakhstani universities, except those which have international faculty, or teachers studied abroad.

The second limitation of the study is time given for research. For me the time dedicated for collecting data, and presenting findings of research was not enough. This problem was considered by me, and therefore I decided to conduct a small-scale research. Initially, I wanted to conduct mixed methods design, and to survey nearly 150 university teachers. This survey would be followed up by interviews. If I conduct a large-scale research, I will have more strong implications, and this problem could be referred for many Kazakhstani universities.

Finally, the next limitation of the study was translating teachers' interviews. As study was conducted in Russian language, it was difficult to translate words of teachers so that not to lose the main idea of the words, and to make it understandable in English language.

### **Conclusion**

This section is the last sections of the thesis. The section aims to conclude the thesis. For conducting this thesis I reviewed many studies on assessment beliefs and

practices, developed instruments in order to answer my research question, and achieve the research purpose. Thus, exploration of university teachers' assessment beliefs and practices allowed me to design some implications for increasing the quality of education in Kazakhstani universities, and for further research. Thus, I believe that this research has a modest contribution to assessment topic in Kazakhstani higher education sphere.

As a final point, I view that this study will bring its contributions not only for teachers who practice this assessment. I believe that it brings contributions for educational leaders as well. Thus I would like to conclude by the word of educationalists who claimed, “If you want to change student learning then change the methods of assessment” (Brown, Bull, & Pendlebury, 1997, p.7).

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### Appendix A: Map of Kazakhstan



Note: West Kazakhstan region is highlighted with red color. Retrieved from Wikipedia

## **Appendix B: Informed Consent Form**

### **University teachers' assessment beliefs and practice in Kazakhstan**

**DESCRIPTION:** You are invited to participate in a case study on teachers' assessment beliefs. The purpose of the study is to know teachers' opinions on student assessment. You will be asked to take part in three cycle individual interviews. If you agree, our discussions will be tape recorded for the safe of interpreting your answers to help me accurately capture your understanding in your own words. Anonymity is guaranteed for interviewees. Direct quotes from participants used in the thesis, names and other identifying information will be kept anonymous by using pseudonyms. Interviews will be recorded with your permission. However, in case if you do not feel comfortable your interviews may not be recorded. In addition, you will be asked to provide with your syllabus for review. The data will be kept confidential for the duration of the study. Thus, all gathered data will be saved locked and protected by password. No one except me and my supervisor of research will have access to this information. On completion of the thesis, data will be retained for a further six months and then deleted.

**TIME INVOLVEMENT:** Your participation will take approximately one hour for each interview. The interviews will be scheduled between March 10<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> at a time mutually agreed between you and me.

**RISKS AND BENEFITS:** There are no risks associated with this study. The benefits which may reasonably be expected to result from this study are results of the study which might be helpful to understand about assessment policy in university. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect you in any ways.

**PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS:** If you have read this form and have decided to participate in this project, please understand your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. The alternative is not to participate. You have the right to refuse to answer particular questions. The results of this research study may be presented at scientific or professional meetings or published in scientific journals.

**CONTACT INFORMATION:**

*Questions:* If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this research, its procedures, risks and benefits, contact the Principal

Investigator, **Zhadyra Makhmetova**, or the advisor of research **Duishonkul Shamatonov**.

Email address: [zhadyra.makhmetova@nu.edu.kz](mailto:zhadyra.makhmetova@nu.edu.kz) Phone number: 8 771 597 83 65

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## **Appendix C: Interview Questions**

### ***Teachers' Previous Assessment Beliefs and Practices***

1. How many years have you worked work in education sphere, in particular, at this university?
2. What courses do you teach?
3. Can you tell me please what is assessment for you as for teacher?
4. When you were a student, what assessment meant to you?
5. What kind of assessment approaches were used by your instructors when you were a student?
6. Did you like those assessment methods? Why did you like it or why not?
7. How do you think what was the purpose of those method of assessment?
8. Did you have a special course on assessment methods when you did your bachelor or master degree? Or did you have any workshops on improvement of assessment policy?
9. What have been changed in assessment policy now?
10. What do you think about the changes related to score rating system?

### ***Teachers' Current Assessment Beliefs and Practices***

1. How do you think why teachers need to assess students?
2. What is the role of assessment in your way of teaching? And Why?
3. What are your current assessment policy? Do you describe it in syllabus?
4. Where have you learned those assessment approaches and strategies?
5. Can you describe your assessment policy?
6. How do you assess students while they study?
7. Can you give an example of an assessment activity you used recently in your classes?
8. Describe the purpose of the assessment activity you just described?
9. How these purposes are connected with the purpose of the class?
10. Can you give me examples of other classroom practices that you would consider to be assessment?
11. What do you think what is assessment for students?
12. When you give students any tasks do you have any criteria for each grade?
13. Like what students are expected to do in order to get A, or B?
14. Or in what cases they will get C, or D?
15. Why it is important to set a criteria?
16. Do you discuss assessment criteria with students?
17. Do you assess students' critical thinking skills? If yes, what kind of tasks helps you evaluate these skills?
18. How do you assess students' ability to interpret and analyze information?
19. How do you conduct midterm examinations? In particular what tasks do you give to students in order to evaluate their whole understanding of the course?



20. Do you provide students with feedback on their learning? If yes how do you do it?  
And why do you provide them feedback, or why not?

***Teachers' Perspectives on Assessment***

1. What do you think is the best way to assess student learning?
2. So overall, what do you see as the purpose of assessment?
3. What challenges do you have when you assess students?
4. How do you think how to overcome these challenges?
5. Do you agree that methods of assessment you use influence on students' understanding of the course?
6. What are the weaknesses of assessment approaches you practice?
7. How will you assess students if you have a freedom for choice?
8. In what ways do you find assessment your practice useful or useless? And why?

### Appendix D: Data Analysis Approach

IQ	Transcript	Codes
How many years have you worked in the sphere of education, and in particularly at this university?	At this university I have been working from 25 <sup>th</sup> of January, 1976. Generally, in the sphere of education I started to work from 1972. Then I studied for my master degree. And from 1976 I have been working here, but I left this work for 6 years, and came back again.	Code 1. Working Experience  Code 2. Years of working
Tell me please what subjects do you teach?	Well, I teach disciplines on the history of Asia and Africa, Arabic countries history. Then, I have disciplines on the modern conflicts and the ways of adjusting it, modern problems of regional ...but really I do not even know how to translate it correctly, cause discipline is in Kazakh language. And I teach other history disciplines for history students.	Code 3. Subjects taught
What does assessment mean for you as for a teacher?	The opportunity to use it for more increased interest to the courses, disciplines, informal relationships, the desire to go beyond what is given in the studying sessions. To enable students to show their level of achievement, mental abilities. Give some impetus to the creative leap. This is ideally.	Code 3. Definition of assessment  Code 4. To provoke interest in subjects taught  Code 5. Level of achievements  Code 6. Level of capability  Code 7. Push for creativity
Could you clarify, please, what do you mean by ideally?	Ideally means as I wished to have and what I had in the previous years before introducing the system with the award of credits. Да, это как бы мне хотелось и как бывало.	Code 8. Ideal perception of assessment
When you were a student, what did assessment mean for you?	Excellent which I usually got, meant for me that teacher evaluated my big job. For the whole years of my studying I did not get even one good mark.	Code 9. Understanding of assessment being student